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SFS Symposium: Sexuality in Science Fiction

In May 2009, I invited a number of sf critics and authors whose work engages with the thematics of gender and sexuality to submit brief essays that could be gathered into a symposium on "Sexuality in Science Fiction." I included a copy of the original Call for Papers for this special issue, which indicated an interest in a broad range of topics: "sf and sex/gender change, sf pornography, technofetishism in sf, alien sex, multiple genders/sexualities in sf, sexual subcultures in sf, sf and censorship, sex work(ers) in sf, slash/flash writing, and more." Contributors were encouraged to engage with these or other relevant topics and to take any angle of approach they chose, from the analytical to the meditative to the polemical. The result is a mosaic of position statements on the representation of sexuality in sf—its past history and future prospects, its challenges as well as its blind spots, its links to social and political realities.—**Rob Latham, SFS**

A Mirror for SF Observers. One of the challenges for queer theorists is figuring out how to deal with the past. Aside from a few exceptionally courageous and/or outrageous individuals (Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein), most of the writers that we might call gay or lesbian if they were alive today would remain cagy about their sexuality, offering textual hints and then denying them. Even Walt Whitman claimed an active heterosexual life, complete with bastards. Thus we get posthumous outings of Shakespeare and Herman Melville, which are immediately contested by scholars determined to "in" them again, and it is unlikely that any eyewitness will ever step forward to settle the matter.

In the history of science fiction and fantasy, a number of writers invite speculation about their sexuality. One of the most significant is Edgar Pangborn, both because he was a very fine writer and because his approach to sf seems to me to be grounded in a queer perspective. Both biographical and textual evidence support reading him as gay—or rather, to fit his time period (1909-1976), homosexual, since "gay" implies a certain post-Stonewall consciousness of and confidence about sexual identity. In response to these clues, earlier critics tend to describe his work with terms such as "sensitive," "elegant," and "infused with longing," while contemporary ones refer regularly to instances of homoeroticism in his fiction. Both strategies are ways of saying, "I'm pretty sure he was, but I can't say it outright."

My suggestion for writers such as Pangborn is to reset the controls on our gaydar, from "detect" to "decode." Wherever his desires lay, and regardless of how actively or openly he pursued them, his work supports queer readings. He writes from an outsider position assigned by heteronormative culture, and he uses that position to critique social norms and institutions. The best example is his strongest novel, *A Mirror for Observers* (1954). Although Patricia Bizzell, in one of the few critical pieces on this neglected writer (*Dictionary of Literary Biography*, volume 8), reads the novel in terms of "an intense homoerotic friendship," that seems to me a limited or even misguided interpretation of the

relationship between the book's Martian narrator and the gifted boy, Angelo, whom he mentors. Elmis, the Martian observer, is the key to the book; ancient and benevolent, sensitive and cantankerous, he is our species' confirmed-bachelor uncle. In a key scene, he shows Angelo a Cretan mirror whose flaws and distortions reveal hidden truths. Elmis and his mirror show us ourselves from a perspective we cannot otherwise attain. I don't think we can account for that insight, or for the emotional charge Pangborn gives it, without reading the novel in terms of sexual identities and desires, but we need also to develop more complex models of both identity and desire than the binaries of same/other, masculine/feminine, or gay/straight.—**Brian Attebery, Idaho State University**

Alien or Alienated? Last summer in France, I attended the Colloque de Cerisy on science fiction entitled *Comment rêver la science fiction à présent*. The audience had been listening to yet another (interesting) paper on feminist utopian science fiction, and at one point someone stated how ineffective those fictions were in the end. "But why?" asked another. "Because those radical feminist fictions alienate the lambda sf reader," he replied (I am paraphrasing), "and if they divert their readers from their fictions, they completely miss their target, which is to change gender roles."

All right, I thought (and eventually stated out loud), so those fictions could not interest most readers because they depicted women living with, loving, and fucking each other? But wait, weren't we talking about science fiction, that same genre in which, on the one hand, female readers for a long time had to identify with male characters because female characters were non-existent or were relegated to traditional roles; that same genre in which, on the other hand, readers were invited to identify with humans of the future meeting the most outlandish creatures, and sometimes with those aliens themselves? In other words, how come a queer human being was too much of an alien for that same reader who could identify with a green man from Arcturus?

To me, science fiction has always been about identifying with the green man, and a great part of my pleasure, as an sf reader, is to look for new metaphors for queer identities, to finally feel at ease in a genre where not everything is a matter of familiar genders and sexualities. Not every piece of sf (intentionally) breaks the common (binary) patterns, but it is always there as a potential. Perhaps science fiction, because it exposes readers to a set of possible worlds and possible identities, is a great *tell-tale* about their ultimate limits—and the closer ones are not always the easiest to cross. To me, the great interest of science fiction has always been about watching two (or more!) aliens fuck each other. And the rest is, I guess, alien to me.... — **Sylvie Bérard, Trent University**

Fucking Machines: A Tirade. It is the dream, not the sleep, of reason that produces monsters. Capital's dream that it is reasonable or, rather, rational (despite its desire) has produced numerous monsters and other devices—fucking machines—that embody/enact the relation of the sexual-subject to capital and the capital-subject to sex. In the fucking machine, the economic, the machinic, and the sexual reveal their intimate productive/destructive embrace. The fucking machine is not just a metaphor. It is a material site where machinized desire and

the desire for the machinic collapse. It is the experience of embodied, intersubjective life under capital. Between the horror of our systematic abuse by the processes of production-consumption and the more meretricious pleasures offered by capital's machinic colonization of sexuality, the fucking machine—like Haraway's ironic-political cyborg, like the extropian wetdream—is a Lukácsian typical subject.

We use and are used by these fucking machines. They deny *and* increase our potential for satisfaction. They dissolve distinctions between organic and inorganic. As labor-power and sites of consumption, we become them. They show that our posthuman *future* is now at least several hundred years old. (And they are pointedly—extravagantly—not Deleuze and Guattari's desiring machines.)

Sf was long imagined sexless.

As if absence was not also presence, as if repression was not obsession.

And as if sf's *manifest* sexual content was *not really sf*! (It's so cute when they say that.)

Sf outs the fucking machine, casts it as an Other because it is also us. Here, quickly, are four of the varieties; as relentlessly hetero-patriarchal as the sf heartland, they are its own very special issue.

1. Industrial/commodity and sexual (re)production are conflated and confused by the *manufacture* of the creature and by his subsequent demand for a mate to be *made* in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818); by numerous idealized artificial women, from Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's robotic *L'Ève future* (1886) to the virtual *SlmOne* (2002), who variously culvert libidinal energies; by Jerome K. Jerome's "The Dancing Partner" (1893), who waltz-fucks Annette to death; by Fritz Lang's false-Maria who provokes catastrophic sexual frenzy; and by the twins/doubles who evoke the specter of mechanical reproduction as capital constructs the subject as quantifiable labor-force—an exchangeable commodity, reproducible and replaceable, whose sheer alien-ness underpins the (re)productive and genetic terrors of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *Alien Resurrection* (1997).

2. The "guilt-free" sex organs and orgasmatrons of *Barbarella* (1968) and *Sleeper* (1973) (re)produce quantifiable—thus marketizable—moments of autoerotic pleasure, just like the standard pleasure models of *Westworld* (1973), *The Stepford Wives* (1975; 2004), *Making Mr. Right* (1987), *Cherry 2000* (1988), *964 Pinocchio* (1991), and *A.I.—Artificial Intelligence* (2001). Backlashed women are, however, raped into reproduction (*Demon Seed* [1977]) and compulsory heterosexuality (*Blade Runner* [1982]); and if they fail to be good mothers, they are imagined as rampaging phalluses with nuclear bombs where their wombs should be (*Eve of Destruction* [1991]).

3. Technology reveals a universe of wonderful/terrible polymorphously-perverse plenitude, and (usually) sets out to police it. H.G. Wells's Time Traveler builds a device to flee the homosocial, only to fall *in* with effete Eloi and *for* the prepubertally-androgynous Weena. In Méliès's *Éclipse du Soleil en pleine Lune* (1907), the savant's telescope sees the heavens as a field of erotic possibility, witnessing a lascivious sun bugger a flirtatious moon, before turning instead to

gaze at female bodies. Lara Croft and other avatars reveal—although it is no revelation—that jacking-in and jacking off are not so very different.

4.) Mediating technologies of vision, not least the spectacular display of cinematic attractions and the scopophilic gaze, constitute a sexual economy of showing-and-looking—a model for the cinematic apparatus itself in Hitchcock, De Palma, *Peeping Tom* (1960), *A Snake of June* (2002), and film theory after Laura Mulvey. Sf film's self-reflexive privileging of screens-within-the-screen foregrounds this dynamic: in *Brainstorm* (1983), an executive plugs into a virtual wankloop for the weekend and nearly ejaculates/dehydrates to death, while *Videodrome* (1983) insists—should we ever have doubted it—that cinematic, televisual, and science-fictional apparatuses themselves are fucking machines.—Mark Bould, University of the West of England

Heteronormative Futures. In response to the 2009 GLAAD Network Responsibility Index rating of “F” for their content, Mark Stern, a SyFy (formerly Sci-Fi) Channel executive, admitted that the channel needed to try harder. After the era of *Will and Grace* (1998-2006), *Queer as Folk* (1999-2000; US version 2000-2005), and *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005), where many TV dramas feature gay characters, onscreen sf lags lamentably behind—with Joss Whedon's productions being honorable if not always helpful exceptions.

The utopian futures of *Star Trek* have remained determinedly heteronormative, with occasional hand-waving to mollify the fans—there are gays, but we've not seen them (where's Will?); there were gays, but a plague killed them (triffic); or there were gays, but it got cured (thanks). The best we are left with is a game of Spot the Queer—a tactic borrowed from the McCarthyites—where those of us in the know decode a look, a phrase, a liking for show-tunes, into the sense that so-and-so in that program or film is secretly gay. The streets find their own uses for things, and we slash away.

In retrospect, the period that gave birth to slash was a golden age—between the events of Stonewall and the identification of HIV was a decade of liberation. At the same time as fights for Civil Rights and equality for women, a number of organizations campaigned for gay lib, and homosexuality became more visible. In late 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders, followed by the American Psychological Association a year or so later. Surely sf was well-placed to reflect such social changes?

Apparently not, judging by the research I've been doing into 1970s sf. It is there, but it becomes a matter of definition. Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (1975) and Thomas M. Disch's *On Wings of Song* (1979) seemed likely candidates, but Kidd has sex as frequently with women as with men and Daniel Weinreb is sometimes dismissive of being but sometimes claims to be a hustler. Bisexuality seems to be the order of the day. Joanna Russ's gay character in *And Chaos Died* (1970) behaves straightly, and for all the talk about homosexuality in *The Dispossessed* (1974), actual homosexual behavior is omitted. In some of John Varley's short stories, characters swap sex—but clearly that adds a more complex orientation to the matter. And J.G. Ballard's *Crash* (1973) adds anal sex to its

catalogue of moral tightrope-walking. Again there are honorable exceptions—but Mandella remains straight in the homosexual futures of Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War* (1974). Curiously it is two films—*The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976) and *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971)—that seem most radical during the period. Too often gay became a label for anyone who challenged gender stereotypes as much as an actual sexual orientation.

Forty years on, real gay characters are still rare in written sf, and almost nonexistent on the small or large screen. And even the rare televisual exceptions seem to struggle to find something to do with such characters after they come out—all too often reaching for the gay gothic as a plot coupon (and spare us from any more *Brokeback Mountain* or vampire or werewolf metaphors). Whether the sf audience is ready for more—when crime, reality show, and sitcom audiences clearly are—remains to be seen.—**Andrew M. Butler, Canterbury Christ Church University**

Some Notes on the Failure of Sex and Gender Inquiry in SF. Most of the readers of this forum will be scholars who will automatically footnote this rant, so I'm leaving out the footnotes and going straight (pardon the expression) to the meat of the matter.

The communications satellite. The bank card. The laptop. The moon mission. Cyberspace. Virtual reality suits. Bioengineering and cloning. Atomic weapons. Thin screens and smart paper. Hackers. Anything else on the list of sf tropes that have become common parlance? Sure, we can add a few or a lot. But is the End of Gender or a redefinition of sex on the list? No.

I'm not talking about cute new high-tech ways to create sex objects or have orgasms. Those abound. The sf version of the blow-up doll is legion, whether utopian or dystopian in narrative slant. I'm talking about a redefinition of how we conceive of sex and gender. Has anyone abolished gender yet, in any lasting way?

I'm not just talking about the invisibility of lesbian, gay, ambisexual, trans-identified, or otherwise queer characters and situations. That's the tip of the iceberg. I'm talking about the invisibility of queer as a notion at all. A century or so after the creation of modern homosexuality, sixty years or so after the US military created gayness, forty years after Stonewall, and post-Delany, LeGuin, Russ, Tiptree, Varley, Rafael Carter, Melissa Scott, Nicola Griffith, Elisabeth Vonarburg, Daniel Sernine, Rachel Pollack, M.J. Engh, Candas Dorsey (if I do say so myself), Kelly Link, Nalo Hopkinson, et al., the cultural face of sexuality and gender has changed. So why can't the future contain the same kinds of changes for the "average" sf writer?

Sure, we can all count, on the fingers of one or two hands, maybe also our toes if we are well-read (and have our shoes off), the core texts that have messed with gender roles, sex and sexual behavior, and the shape of sex and gender in the future: a few key texts that have actually done what sf is supposed to do, and have pushed the envelope of what is sex and what is gender. Pause for a moment to remember your favorites. Then, onward.

Most of the time, queer isn't queer enough in sf. Despite all of us pushing the sex-and-gender envelope as hard as we can, it's a hard, harsh membrane and a bunch of our sf writer colleagues, and our readers too, are pushing harder on the outside of it, keeping queer contained and manageable. Or trying to, anyway. Why is that? Are we as a culture so socially invested in modern ideas of gender that we have internalized the gender police? Duh. Even those of us who are queer are too prone to defining the Right Kind of Queer. It's all so boring.

We already know humans come with a variety of genitals and hormones. We've already seen the proof that our behavior is, yet is not, biologically determined. We may be wired this way, but we're not wired this way. We're a cultural construct. And so is our literature. Why are so many of us, in so many ways, not able to see beyond our current paradigms?

I love the writers who *are* pushing these envelopes. I know they (we) exist. But that doesn't mean we've actually been able to shed the present in pursuit of the future. For many of us, our internal year for gender and sexuality is still 1969, shouting "We're here, we're queer, get used to us," and the internal year of the majority of sf is still somewhere between 1947 and *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961).

We don't need more science-fictional *Harrad Experiments*. I don't just want to see more c.-2009 lesbians, gay men, trans people or polyamory in sf. I want to see more. A breakthrough of paradigm. A future those of us stuck in our own internal years (me included, I'm just as much a product of my time as anyone else) can barely imagine—but that we try our damndest to imagine.

Please let us imagine it: a real imagined future where our ideas of gender are so far gone that a modern reader is lost in the subjectivity.

I want a singularity of queer.

(And I want it soon, before I'm too old to enjoy it.)—**Candas Jane Dorsey, Edmonton, Alberta**

SF and Queer Theory: Butler vs. Suvin. My critical interests reside in sf narratives of prosthetic or virtual embodiment, and their intersection with queer-theoretical arguments such as Judith Butler's. Butler famously claims that queer practices of gender performativity, such as drag or butch/femme, disrupt the expressive relation between sex and gender that has come to be termed heteronormativity, the assumption that gender identity naturally emerges from inhabiting a body sexed as either (and only) male or female, and that gender identity in turn is expressed by sexual orientation or heterosexual object choice. I have found Allucquère Rosanne Stone's book *The War of Desire and Technology* (MIT, 1995) useful for its analysis of how virtual systems, in their attenuation of the relation between body and social persona, undo the assumptions about expressive subjectivity characteristic of both Western modernity and heteronormativity. In sf, my touchstone for these issues has been Maureen McHugh's 1993 cybersex story "A Coney Island of the Mind" and, more recently, Nisi Shawl's 2004 story "Deep End" for its rewriting of cybersex conventions in terms of transracial as well as transgender performance. The questions I go on to discuss here also emerge clearly in recent attempts to

articulate queer theory with critical race studies; see Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black* (U of Minnesota P, 2004).

These concerns have led me to the question of heteronormativity in queer theory, as what Butler calls a falsely naturalized “regulatory frame,” and its connection to sf. For Butler, the resignification of heterosexuality through drag or butch/femme performance is intended to open heteronormative gender categories to “future uses of the sign” (“Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss [New York, Routledge, 1991], 19). The result is to emphasize the impossibility of heterosexual norms, exposed “as an incessant and *panicked* imitation of [their] own naturalized idealization” (23; emphasis in original). Both heterosexuality and heteronormative gender distinctions are therefore “rendered thoroughly and radically *incredible*” (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [New York: Routledge, 1990], 141; emphasis in original). The focus is on differences within heteronormativity, precisely in order to destabilize the difference between hetero and homo.

This emphasis on the future and the incredible suggests an overlap with sf protocols, and indeed Darko Suvin’s equally famous argument about the basic contrastive structure of sf as the “literature of cognitive estrangement” implies that sf shares with queer theory an interest in contesting norms. For Suvin, the interaction of cognition and estrangement means the elaboration of fantastic or futuristic themes, the novums or estranging devices of sf, into internally consistent alternate realities. The result of such an elaboration is to confront “a set normative system ... with a point of view implying a new set of norms” (*Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* [New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1979], 6). The critical effect of this cognitive or realistic treatment of the unreal is to reveal “the norms of any age, including emphatically [our] own, as ... changeable” (7), a formulation that echoes Butler’s emphasis on exposing gender as a temporal or iterative process of performance, a “stylization of the body” (*Gender* 33), rather than a fixed essence or identity.

Butler, however, understands queer performativity as an alternative to a transgressive politics that seeks to locate itself outside heteronormativity, in what she calls “a utopian beyond” (34). From Butler’s perspective, then, sf’s alternate realities, in the process of cognitively estranging sexual norms by attempting to literalize alternatives to them, would also presumably run this same risk of ontologizing the difference between hetero norms and their alternatives, undermining or contradicting sf’s power to expose the phantasmatic “nature” of heteronormative frameworks. For Butler, the ideal of heteronormativity fails because, like all “ontological locales,” it is “fundamentally uninhabitable” (146). But in sf, estrangement through the cognitive confrontation of alternative norms seems to imply a commitment to presenting both the dominant and the alternate norms precisely as habitable “locales.” As Suvin puts it, in sf, “a transgression of the cultural norm is signified by the transgression of a more than merely cultural, of an ontological, norm” (70-71).

In this context, I would ask whether sf’s creation of alternate fictional realities reifies and ontologizes the two settings that dramatize the confrontation between

competing norms; or does the normalization of the novum into a realistic setting avoid the problem of defining queerness as abstractly transgressive and therefore situated outside norms entirely, even as the alternate narrative setting implies that we are not trapped by existing norms either? From this latter perspective, sf as Suvin defines it might have something to offer queer theory, even as queer theory can help to define sf's potential for thinking critically about sexuality and gender.—**Thomas Foster, University of Washington**

Hard Takes Soft, Still. Sf as a genre is terrified of the body. As a result, its depictions of physical pleasures are rare. Historically, writers and readers seem to prefer their characters to pop nutrition pills rather than delight in a gourmet meal, dwell 24/7 in sterile environments rather than wander through a wood, and jack into virtual sex rather than touch another human being.

When sf does dare mention sex, the focus is on the intellectual and emotional aspects of the experience. Sf still subscribes to Cartesian dualism: the mind is pure, adamantine, and noble, the body bestial, soft, and squicky. (I have talked about this at length elsewhere: see my essay "Writing from the Body," online at: <<http://www.nicolagriffith.com/body.html>>.) Even a hint of body-to-body sex can be enough to earn an sf novel an Approach With Caution warning—that is, categorization as soft sf.

In this regard, the world-view of the sf Old Guard has a lot in common with that of the cultural guardians of Old Iceland. Embedded in the Icelandic sagas is that society's tendency to divide the world—politics, intelligence, gender, sexuality, the physical properties of objects—into *hvatr* (hard) and *blauðr* (soft). Hard equates to bold, independent, powerful, vigorous, sharp, dry, and decisive, soft to weak, powerless, dull, moist, and yielding.

Guess which was deemed the more admirable quality.

Guess which kind of sf, hard or soft, is privileged.

For the Old Guard, a novel's hardness depends to some degree on the biological sex of bodies entwined. Women are perceived as literally and metaphorically softer than men. If the viewpoint character having sex in an sf novel is a woman, the squick factor is doubled. If she's having sex with another woman, the Old Guard passes out.

Consider reviews of my second novel, *Slow River* (1995), in which much real estate was devoted to denouncing (I'm paraphrasing) the "exclusively and explicitly lesbian sex." The thing is, there's plenty of heterosex; reviewers just couldn't see past the (to them) Othersex. Given the way they carried on, you'd be forgiven for thinking it was porn. Certainly many dykes read the reviews, thought "Woo-hoo, one-handed reading!" and bought the book. Then they sent me pissed off emails: *Where's all the sex??*

Consider, too, a well-known experiment: put ten engineers in a room, three of them women. Ask observers how many are female; they will say "half." The Other blots out the Norm. (Yes, this experiment is ancient as these things go—dating from the 1960s or 1970s, I think. No doubt observers in today's brave new world would require as many as, gasp, four women to qualify as "half.")

This is as true now as it was then. It's the twenty-first century, yet still I have never seen *Slow River*—a novel stuffed with shiny hardware, chemistry, and extrapolations about the future—labeled as hard sf. The Old Guard still rules.—**Nicola Griffith, Seattle, Washington**

Kinking SF. Sf stories that explore the complex dynamics of power and desire allow for critical reflections that span countries, worlds, or the vast expanses of time and space. A number of texts stand out for the ways in which they have engaged with the constructions of gender, the fluidity of sex(uality), or the desire for beings other than human, whether that otherness be defined by alien culture/biology or technological mediation/alteration/integration. These texts include C.L. Moore's "No Woman Born" (1944), Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (1975) and *Trouble on Triton* (1976), George Nader's *Chrome* (1978), Candace Jane Dorsey's "(Learning About) Machine Sex" (1988), Eleanor Arnason's *Ring of Swords* (1993), Melissa Scott's *Shadow Man* (1995), Geoff Ryman's *Lust* (2001), and Eden Robinson's "Terminal Avenue" (2004). Each of these texts, and others like them, have effectively explored the broader social and political contexts of their worlds, and ours, through the politics of sex and power. Yet for all the potential insights these explorations may provide, however extrapolative or allegorical those might be, sf always leaves us wanting more. Many questions remain for which science fiction could provide rich explorations, particularly in regard to areas defined as "kink," outside arbitrary constructions of acceptable sexual morality.

How would significant differences in sexual morality manifest in human or alien cultures? How will biological and technological innovations change understandings of gender and sex(uality)? What would fully immersive virtual reality open up for the polysemic possibilities of BDSM, and for roleplay more generally? How would alien physiology construct understandings of pain and pleasure, and how would that translate into broader social and political contexts in that alien culture? What versions might truly alien cultures have of foodplay, fireplay, or knifeplay? How will sex and sexuality change when technology, and perhaps anything that marks us as bodily human, changes beyond the causal logic of extrapolation?

While there are many exemplary texts that have touched upon some of these questions, there remains so much more that has yet to be explored.—**Adam Guzkowski, Trent University**

Queering Humanity in SF. Discrimination by reason of race, gender, or religious affiliation lacks the respectability it once had. So the social norms surrounding sexuality have become the last bastion of human difference. Despite late-twentieth-century narrative explorations and theorizing by genre writers and critics, science fiction has been and remains part of the regulatory process that naturalizes human sexuality as heteronormative. As Charles Elkins long ago argued in these pages, genre writers frequently replicate the social norms of their times (see "An Approach to the Social Functions of American SF," *SFS* 4.3 [November 1977]: 228-32). A glance at the paintings and illustrations in Harry

Harrison's *Great Balls of Fire: An Illustrated History of Sex in Science Fiction* (1977) reinforces this point.

But what lessons do we draw from the genre's imagined extraterrestrial races whose reproductive and sexual relations have been imagined as "other"? H.G. Wells's Martians reproduce by budding and Raymond Z. Gallun's Martians are decanted from test tubes. The former are evolutionary antagonists who are physically incapable of the affection shown between the narrator and his wife. The latter sport a difference that makes no difference in a tale that marks its otherworldly protagonist as human in the only ways that count. In either case heteronormative human beings are the privileged standard. These gestures indicate that the genre's aliens may be either enemies or friends but, more often than not, they offer no trouble to our understanding of human nature.

Recently sf writers have entertained a general posthumanism that breaks with the regulatory hierarchies commonly associated with human sexuality. Challenging mid-century definitions of sexuality means that what is considered "natural" is disrupted and replaced by something else. In sf the queering of humanity is most often expressed as a literal, material change or a replacement of human biology (e.g., the Singularity).

Allowing modern medicine to de-link human reproduction from the female body (as Shulamith Firestone proposed in *The Dialectic of Sex* [1970]) is still considered "wacky" in mainstream political discourse (see "Gender Differences in Medicine," *To the Contrary* [PBS Program], 22 June 2001). This social climate has produced a range of optimistic and pessimistic responses in sf. Kim Stanley Robinson's *MARS TRILOGY* (1992-95) is optimistic about a human evolution that forces the species into a different, more harmonious era. Over the course of her career, on the other hand, Octavia E. Butler was both intrigued by the evolutionary possibility of alternate sexual selections and skeptical that such changes would really better the human condition.

At issue is whether the changing nature of human sexuality (real or imagined) will allow us to achieve the better angels of our nature.—**De Witt Douglas Kilgore, Indiana University**

LGBT/YA/SF. Would it be fair to say that everything I know about sex I learned from reading science fiction and fantasy? Well, no, and undoubtedly that's all to the good. Did an adolescent reading program dominated in large measure by Andre Norton, Robert A. Heinlein, and A.E. van Vogt teach me things that I might not have learned on the street, from my parents, or in what passed for sex education in the 1960s? Probably not. What was considerably more influential, in the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s, though, were such novels as *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Female Man* (1975) which, along with Betty Friedan and the women in my graduate classes at the University of Minnesota, delivered a series of highly valuable kicks to the head, permanently rearranging how I look at the world.

Feminist fantasy and sf for adolescents didn't really exist when I was young and there wasn't a lot of exploration of gender roles or alternate sexualities, for all that Mary Poppins, Miss Pickerell, and *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel* (1958)

served up the occasional strong female character. Things began changing in the late 1980s, however, and in recent decades, adolescent readers of sf and fantasy have had available to them at least some stories that deal seriously and intelligently with a variety of possibilities concerning sex and gender. In Tamora Pierce's many fantasies, from *Alanna* (1983) to, most recently, *Bloodhound* (2009), young women are shown aspiring to and achieving active roles, as knights in shining armor no less, despite sexism and with normal adolescent sexuality. Beginning with *Magic's Pawn* (1989), Mercedes Lackey has made a career of creating sympathetic gay characters in high fantasy as, in urban fantasy, has Francesca Lia Block, beginning with *Weetzie Bat* (1989) and, most recently, *Necklace of Kisses* (2005). David Gerrold, in science fiction, beginning with *Jumping Off the Planet* (2000), and Holly Black, in dark fantasy, beginning with *Tithe* (2002), are also worth mentioning in this context.

In such contemporary urban fantasies as *Skellig* (1998), *The Fire Eaters* (2003), and *The Savage* (2008), David Almond has presented a series of adolescents whose sense of gender is at odds with their conservative northern English society. In the intensely realistic near-future tale *How I Live Now* (2004), Meg Rosoff explores anorexia, incest, and teen sex with an unflinching eye. In Patrick Ness's *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008), this year's James Tiptree Award winner, a variety of societies are shown, each of which has made different decisions concerning gender relationships, and the gay adoptive parents of the young protagonist are portrayed without comment except in so far as they have strengths or weaknesses as parents. In truth, the large majority of YA science fiction and fantasy centers on traditional nuclear families and heteronormative gender roles, but readers on the lookout for other options can often find what they're looking for. It would have been nice to have had such books available when I was a teen.—**Michael Levy, University of Wisconsin-Stout**

Remembering Eve Sedgwick. The death of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in April 2009 reminded me of how significant *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (Columbia UP, 1985) and *Epistemology of the Closet* (U of California P, 1990) were in establishing the exciting potential of "queer" reading during the 1990s. Sedgwick also helped to revitalize that interstitial literary era, the fin de siècle, then rather uncertainly located between the Victorian and the Modern. While Judith Butler probably traveled further because she offered an abstract theory suitable for processing a wide array of texts, Sedgwick was always interested in the concrete, local, and difficult experience of reading specific texts in their detailed historical contexts. There is much in Sedgwick's work from which sf studies could still learn.

Sedgwick's argument in *Epistemology of the Closet* was that Western thought had, during the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, been fractured by a crisis surrounding homosexual (and therefore heterosexual) definition. The homosexual was a specific minority figure, to be defined, medicalized, contained, and socially outcast by a host of juridico-legal authorities. But homosexuality might also be a universal *tendency* in all human sexuality, a drive that could disturb and destabilize any claim to heterosexual normativity. This was sometimes what

Freud scandalously proposed. Homosexuality was therefore “a space of overlapping, contradictory, and conflictual forces” (*Epistemology* 45). This resulted in a kind of paranoid masculine culture, where the space “between men” might shift uncertainly between homosocial fraternal bonds and masked homosexual desire. In a series of brilliant readings of works by Herman Melville, Oscar Wilde, and Henry James, barely conceivable desires took shape in narratives of “homosexual panic.” In *Between Men*, Sedgwick had argued that the Gothic romance repeatedly articulated this panic in stories where men were persecuted by their doubles—from James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) to Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Sedgwick was therefore not averse to reading popular-cultural forms through the prism of queer theory. Her work was memorably extended into the colonial adventure narrative by Anne McClintock in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 1995), in which H. Rider Haggard’s African landscapes were examined as “porno-tropics,” openly sexualized spaces where racial markers had to be grasped as intrinsically sexual ones too. Elaine Showalter’s “queer” reading of *Jekyll and Hyde* in *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Viking, 1990) was another important landmark in suggesting how feminist readings might be reconfigured by queer theory.

In her collection of essays *Tendencies* (Duke UP, 1994), written at the height of the ascendancy of Queer Theory, Sedgwick defined “queer” as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements ... aren’t made ... to signify” (8). Queer reading picked up the resonance of queer as a deliberately odd perspective, perverse or counterintuitive. This approach annoyed some critics and probably did open the gates for far too many over-active interpretations of classic fictions. Yet despite these occasional excesses, we should not lose sight of the value Sedgwick’s work still offers.

The excellent recent collection, *Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction* (reviewed in this issue), doesn’t have that much to say about Sedgwick, and its “Queer Genealogy of SF” is notably focused on the very recent past. But the designation “Queer SF” should not only signal contemporary writers already in a kind of feedback loop with queer theory itself—the most obvious example being Samuel R. Delany (but we might also add Octavia Butler or Nicola Griffith or Geoff Ryman). The very beginnings of genre sf in the late nineteenth century are clearly coincident with the emergence of a new set of demarcations around hetero/homosexuality, incoherently mapped across masculinity and femininity. I’ve always thought it absurd to claim, as Vivian Sobchack did in her 1985 essay “The Virginity of Astronauts,” that sexuality was entirely absent from most sf. Her argument is focused on postwar American sf film, but it repeats a standard assumption about a putatively “immature” (or pre-adolescent) sf that only belatedly—and rather messily—discovered sex in the 1960s. What Sedgwick suggests is that a genre codified as “masculine” and overlapping, in the 1880s and 1890s, with the colonial adventure and the Gothic romance is *already* saturated with issues relating to sexuality. Re-read Rider Haggard’s *King*

Solomon's Mines (1885) if you don't believe me.—**Roger Luckhurst, University of London**

The Coming Future. This is a plea for good queer sf. Despite its speculative grounding, Anglo-US/UK sf has a sad track record when it comes to innovative stories about non-normative sexuality. While the 1960s New Wave, in the spirit of the sexual revolution, engaged with sexuality more explicitly, and cyberpunk's technobodies provided new surfaces of projection, queer folks most of the time were left out of the romantic or raunchy interactions with aliens, enhanced bodies, and virtual-sex encounters.

So what makes good queer sf? I second Donna Haraway's assertion that sf is political theory. While many of its reflections appear introspective and thus not political, it is the narrating of future visions, the authority claimed in designing what is to come (and what is not to come), who counts as subject and who doesn't, that makes sf political, not just the social order of its futuristic cultures. Adding to this Gayle Rubin's early claim that sexuality (not just gender) is political, sexuality in sf also becomes a political issue. Who is coming (and who isn't) in imagined sexual encounters? As it often happens, innovation advances from the margins into mainstream sf: lesbian sf and utopian fiction examine desire in relation to gendered power; sf writers of color explore sexuality and racialized power. Too often, however, the narratives still rely on binary categories that leave heterosexuality intact. Homosexuality and anti-colonial self-determination are powerful as resistant narrative positions, but within them, the categories of us and them, self and other remain in place.

One of queer theory's contributions to discourse on sexual politics (a discourse that had been spearheaded by feminists) is that sex is about power, and that power runs along complicated lines of social interaction—an application (and extension) of Foucault's theory of power that makes visible how gender, race, class, bodies, age, and nationality all inform and produce power and thus are part of sexuality. Science fiction is fertile ground for queer envisionings of sexuality, since it permits endless formations of bodies and thus of desires. Good queer/transgender sf makes obsolete the comfortable binary classifications of sexual orientation, homo- versus heterosexuality, bisexuality, and the gender expectations of male and female, and does not try to recreate them in a future populated by alien cyborgs and AIs.

Good queer sf addresses issues of power without eroticizing the (racial, cultural, or physical) Other, nor does it reiterate existing power in sf disguise (e.g., straight male sexual fantasies about animal-like, feminized aliens and/or techno-prostitutes, or about sleeping with their own female clones). These stories privilege already established sexual narratives and are quite boring to those who don't identify with the straight (white) male subjectivity that underlies them. Instead, good queer sf undermines heterosexuality as the normative economy of desire, and engages with how desire is constructed through bodies, and privileges the non-normative. In this, race becomes as much a component of desire as is gender, and good queer sf investigates heteronormativity's sexual taboos by questioning, not legitimizing, forms of power.

I guess I'm an old-fashioned queer who, while appreciating the potential of a broad alliance against white, male heteronormativity, holds with the opinion that queer sf has to clearly challenge heterosexuality and the gender binary invested in upholding it. Raunchy, kinky sf is not necessarily queer if white male heterosexuality is the starting point of its explorations—many of the aliens and/or female cyborgs having sex with humans do not rethink desire; they merely channel it into familiar paths through newly configured bodies. Which leaves the work to the queer reader to rewrite the stories in their imaginations.

The best queer sf I've been finding these days is sf erotica that—with the simplicity of much function-bound fiction—manages to radically shift the established economy of desire in its shameless embrace of queer sexual practices in sf settings. Also, works such as Octavia Butler's vampire novel *Fledgling* (2005) challenge the straight paradigm with pleasures articulated across ages, sexes, races, and species. These narratives create queer subjectivities *within the text*, and it is here that sf lives up to its pleasurable, intersectional potential—and we can all go home, well ... satisfied.—**Patricia Melzer, Temple University**

Going boldly on ... to the 1950s? The heteronormativity of science fiction for children and teens is astonishing. It reflects neither the real world, nor the wider world of books for younger readers.

In the real world, most YA books using the ensemble structure (five or six characters, someone for everyone to identify with) will have at least one gay-oriented teen. Someone will have had a divorce, there will be step-children, there will be boys who don't like boy stuff and girls who don't like girl stuff. There will be an assumption that mothers have paid employment and fathers are real people who quite like their kids.

In most science fiction for children and teens, all of that is forgotten. It's as if—in conforming to Heinlein's idea that while you make part of the future strange, you need some kind of anchor to the present through an element of unchangingness—there has been an almost unanimous choice to make the 1950s nuclear family the baseline. Just a few examples: William Nicholson's award-winning *The Wind Singer* (2000), in which the exam results of the father dictate the fortunes of the family; Jeanne DuPrau's acclaimed *City of Ember* (2003), in which no one in the underground city ever seems to want a divorce; or even, to be fair and pick books I like, Conor Kosticks' *Epic* (2004), which is a similarly divorce-free zone, or K.A. Applegate's *Remnants* (2001-2003), which seems to be able to contemplate all sorts of things, but not homosexuality. In Garth Nix's *Shade's Children* (1997), the one child who is beyond the norm, a castrated boy, dies before the end, as we are led into a future in which the nuclear family is restored. In these books, most of the adult women don't work, or if they do work, they are shown mostly as mothers.

There are exceptions: orphans are normal in children's and teen fiction, so I will ignore those. Of the YA books, in Ann Halam's (a.k.a. Gwyneth Jones's) *Siberia* (2005), there is no mention of a father and a small indicator that the protagonist might be a created child. Susan Price's *Odin's Voice* (2004) and its sequel *Odin's Queen* (2006) presents a loving relationship between two women:

it isn't sexual, is in many ways abusive, and is destroyed by a man, although as this turns out to be a betrayal on all sides, heteronormativity is not restored. Gregory Maguire's *I Feel Like the Morning Star* (1997) manages to avoid assumptions of both heteronormativity and whiteness (yet another short rant available on request) and Troon Harrison's *Eye of the Wolf* (2003) goes further, projecting a future Canada in which polyamory is one of the many norms. One might argue that this is possible because these are books for *teens*, but Adam Rex and Joan Lennon both succeed in writing books for children where sexual identity and gender behavior is not normed to the 1950s. In Adam Rex's *The True Meaning of Smek Day* (2007), the protagonist is clearly the child of a single parent, while in Joan Lennon's *Questors* (2007), the three children have the same mother but different fathers, and one of them is pre-gendered. Zie will choose zie's sex when zie is good and ready, and no pressure from the other two children (one boy, one girl) will hurry zie. I do not think it a coincidence at all that it is these books, each of which imagines a different mode of sexual behavior or social fabric, that present adult women holding down interesting and responsible jobs.—Farah Mendlesohn, Middlesex University

Trans(lating) Sex/Gender/Sexuality: Trans SF? With the controversy over the sex-testing of South African runner Caster Semenya (a news story that raises disturbing connections among gender policing, homophobia, and racism), it seems relevant to ask how trans perspectives inform sf. Transgender, transsexuality, and intersex provide the genre with potent tools for deconstructing assumptions about gender and sexuality (and the relationship between them) while also offering a reflection of historical and contemporary changes in social mores in relation to embodiment and desire. Of course, trans representations in sf also reflect the lives, practices, and epistemologies of people who identify as trans—the often neglected “T” in LGBT.

Sf is not, as a rule, good at the soft, wet, messy, abject aspects of human and other bodies. This discomfort is redoubled when dealing with trans questions because the crisis points around trans identity so often take place in the various dissimilar but inevitably fraught spaces where people are unable to ignore bodily realities: e.g., toilets, encounters with airport security, spaces of actual sexual practice. Yet depictions of trans people and bodies, whether as humans or aliens, thread through the entire history of sf, often functioning allegorically as ways of questioning Cartesian approaches to sex as dichotomous and gender as its essential consequence.

Two of the main forms of sf that question the heteronormative logic equating gender with sexuality involve, on the one hand, hermaphroditic people, usually aliens, as in Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and, on the other hand, sex changes. Sex changes are perhaps surprisingly common in sf and their use and rationale ranges from deeply reactionary (the kinds of stories that Joanna Russ deconstructs so thoroughly in her 1980 *SFS* essay “Amor Vincit Foeminam”) to subtle explorations of the ways in which contemporary humans understand the complex relationships among embodiment, gender, sex, desire, and sexual orientation. Even works as problematic as John Varley's *Steel Beach* (1992) prod

readers to think through questions as basic as whether choice of sex object, sexual orientation, or neither would persist through a sex change. For some readers, the answer seems utterly obvious; for others, the ability even to pose the question is remarkably liberatory.

Similarly, one could ask whether single-sex worlds can be usefully understood as a form of transgender. Since either gender is defined, at best, as half of humanity (when men are not assumed to equate to “mankind”), do all-women societies become a form of trans simply because the women in them take on all the aspects of humanity? There are a lot more questions than answers when it comes to varieties of trans sf, as well as many different perspectives on these issues (even from members of trans communities). Overall, they deserve a great deal more of our critical attention, both for their allegorical qualities and for the ways in which they represent (or fail to represent) trans lives in the contemporary world, including the potential for trans people to be champion athletes, successful politicians—or even starship captains.—Wendy Gay Pearson, University of Western Ontario

Title: Four Drabbles

Fandom: Melissa Scott’s novels: *Burning Bright* (Quinn Lioe); *Dreaming Metal* (Celine Fortune, Rivardy Jian, Celeste); *The Jazz* (Tin Lizzie); *Trouble and Her Friends* (Trouble, Cerise)

Rating: Adult

Disclaimer: One argument made about fan fiction (stories written using existing characters and settings) is that such works can be interpretive acts, can embody readers’ responses to texts. The following are four drabbles based on the novels of Melissa Scott. A drabble is a fan fic of exactly 100 words.

The Art of Life. Life first wakes from metal dreams not in the workshops of cartels but in the colors, illusions, sweat, and music of the Empires where art and music are offered daily. Reverdy, glimpsing shadows of life in the machine that interfaces between pilots and FTL hyperspace, sells her construct. Celine buys it for her act, mating it with another construct, to run humaniform robots cast in her own image, gold, bronze, silver, and copper. The women of power, pilot and conjurer, birth Celeste with the help of the midwives of music and flames, first true AI coming from the women’s worlds.

High Noon. Seahaven shimmers. Trouble strolls down the street, Cerise close. “Are you sure?”

Trouble nods. Wood, dust, and glass soak in sun. The light changes, and a jagged run of music marks the arrival. Shadow slides through air to stand in Trouble’s sight. Black leather coat wraps around silk shirt and jeans covering dyes Trouble knows mark half her body, only a webbed corner showing through the open collar.

Trouble nods. “Lizzie.”

The two, born of the street and prison, circle, sifting through the stories on the nets. They are drawn to each other, fearful. Cerise, smiling, stands back to watch.

The View from Persephone. Quinn, spinning through data feeds, collects images for her stories. Gleaming bodies bright against the night sky draw her closer. Women's bodies, copper, silver, bronze, and gold, stretch in all directions, touching and touched. Behind them all, or between them all, a woman swathed in silk stands, face turned away, hand resting on an iron frame.

Breath quickening, Quinn pulls closer, falling through. The image blurs. She pulls back, view sharp again. Used to Burning Bright's masks and costumes, she is enchanted by these bare faces and bodies. Trying to see the woman's face, Quinn wonders what story she could create.

Transformative Realities. Pages open into realities which do not ignore pain and oppression and yet show women working and growing and loving women. That center is grounded, solid, whether we navigate FTL hyperspace with Reverdy or swim virtual spaces with Trouble, Cerise, and Tin Lizzy. Game transforms into art transforms into life as Quinn burns bright, as Celinde changes the intelligences of machines. No utopias exist, but utopias are too distant, lack any connections. I will choose these live women I love who live every day at risk in worlds so close to mine that they can touch, can dream of transformation.
—Robin Reid, Texas A&M University-Commerce

Where Are the Lesbians? When I think about sexuality in mainstream sf, I'm most struck by the relative dearth of lesbian characters. Particularly when the genre has, in recent years, embraced gay male characters and a wide range of sexual expressions, the small number of lesbians seems at best peculiar. Nor do I think this is purely the result of external, editorial pressure.

Shortly after the publication of my novel *The Kindly Ones* (1987), a reader insisted that two of the characters, the Peacekeeper Leith Moraghan and the pilot Guil ex-Tamne, were neither lesbians nor having an affair. Nor would she accept that I'd intended both. I would have dismissed this misunderstanding had editors Lyn Paleo and Eric Garber not repeated the mistake in their annotated bibliography *Uranian Worlds: A Guide to Alternative Sexuality in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror* (2nd ed., 1990). They focused instead on the narrator, Trey Maturin, whose gender is never stated; if you assume Maturin is male, the listing points out, then the relationship with a male actor is gay. They didn't mention the lesbians, Paleo later told me, because those characters didn't have sex, and so they couldn't be sure.

Oddly, no one ever made this mistake with any of the gay male characters. Everyone read them as queer without needing to see them have sex. The lesbian characters, however, could be read as sexless—in effect, made invisible—even when the same conventionally queer cues were employed.

This changed the way I wrote. In subsequent books, I included explicit sex between any lesbian characters. I was determined that no one was going to be able to ignore at least that part of my intent, and so far, at least, no one has told me that Trouble or any of her friends aren't actually gay. But I've still never needed to do the same for the gay male characters.

The range of sexual possibility now routinely included in the field suggests that neither prudery nor simple misogyny is the answer. Perhaps it's a limited

view of what a female protagonist must be: young, growing into her power, often damaged or conflicted—the Warrior Princess. But that character could as easily be a lesbian as a straight woman, and yet she isn't. Maybe it's a symptom of a more general failure of imagination, and the missing lesbians are a warning of something else missing in the field: a wider vision of what kind of person is worthy of a story.—**Melissa Scott, Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Thinking Sex in SF. In 1984, Gayle Rubin's provocative essay "Thinking Sex: Notes Towards a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" challenged the academy to think about sex. Although some, she notes, would consider sex frivolous in an era faced with problems such as poverty and war, contemporary hysterias around sexual behavior suggest it is a site where people's most profound anxieties and preoccupations emerge. Sex, Rubin reminds us, has symbolic weight.

Yet this symbolic weight has frequently been something for which academic analyses are ill-equipped. Indeed, as Rubin surveys issues germane to her context of publication (right-wing opposition to sex education, institutionalized homophobia, legal debates over pornography), she emphasizes their crucial import because the outcomes of these struggles will "leave a residue in the form of laws, social practices, and ideologies which then affect the way in which sexuality is experienced long after the immediate conflicts have faded" (*The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Neil Badmington and Julia Thomas [New York: Routledge, 2008: 281-323], 287). And she laments the absence of coherent, intelligent, nuanced critical theory to think radically about *sex*—not only about gender as a social category, which Rubin feels has been effectively addressed by feminist scholarship.

Now in 2009, well into the new millennium, many of the same social practices and ideologies that fomented public debate in the 1980s continue to plague us, taking the form of such things as the cult of virginity promoted by Disney teen icons or the controversial votes on gay marriage proposals in recent US elections. We now have more critical tools for thinking about sex and sexuality, thanks to theorists such as Judith Butler, Jeffrey Weeks, John D'Emilio, Teresa de Lauretis, Michel Foucault, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Judith Halberstram. They offer us the critical tools to deal with the residue of the 1980s, as well as to participate in contemporary struggles shaping the laws, social practices, and ideologies of our own day. Increasingly we see this theory being used in readings of sf.

Like critical theory, sf also boasts authors willing to explore the complexities of desire and coupling through all the imaginative tools that the genre makes available. The paradigm-shifting work of Joanna Russ is obviously relevant here; any listing will inevitably be incomplete, but among the writers who have helped us think more radically about sexuality, desire, subjectivity, and politics are Nalo Hopkinson, Kelly Link, Gwyneth Jones, Raphael Carter, J.G. Ballard, Samuel R. Delany, Nicola Griffith, and Octavia Butler. Scholarship on these writers has engaged with the pressing questions of the politics of sexuality, including crucial debates about who counts as "human" and which lives are livable. At its best, sf

is a genre that continually challenges the status quo and makes room for other ways of being, of loving—and of fucking. All of this is good news and suggests that sf can be an important, progressive voice in these debates.

But, like Rubin, I think we need to do more when it comes to thinking about sex. As well as writing about authors whose critical engagement with questions of sexuality and power pushes the boundaries of the current social configuration, we need also to ask hard questions about those whose seeming lack of engagement with sexual politics betrays a dominant ideology masquerading as “natural” or “neutral.” And we need to begin reading queerly the supposedly “conventional” attitudes of traditional sf; Wendy Pearson’s analysis of the suppressed homoeroticism of John W. Campbell’s *Who Goes There?* (1938) is an exemplary model (see “Alien Cryptographies: The View from Queer,” *SFS* 26.1 [March 1999] 1-22). Instead of merely dismissing as inevitable features of the time things such as Altaira’s short skirt in *Forbidden Planet* (1956) or the brass-brassiered vixens on classic pulp covers, we need to ask ourselves why such images persist in sf, what they tell us about the genre’s imaginary. A case in point is Robert A. Heinlein’s *The Door into Summer* (1957). Why do we not discuss the fact that the protagonist of this celebrated novel invents time-travel at least in part to enable and sanction a kind of pedophilia?

Thinking radically about sex requires us to examine our most basic preconceptions, our most sacrosanct beliefs. And if sf is to live up to its potential to imagine a future of diverse sexual identities, pleasures, cultures, and modes of embodiment, then it must be willing to look at its darkest sexual fascinations as well as its most enlightened ones. Sexuality is political, as Rubin contends, “organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others” (315). It is time to start having a serious look at how sf has contributed to—and can modify—this hierarchy of sexualities.—**Sherryl Vint, Brock University**

Allison de Fren

Technofetishism and the Uncanny Desires of A.S.F.R. (alt.sex.fetish.robots)

The interfusion of technology and sexuality—particularly when it takes the form of an artificial woman—has been an explosive combination, dating back to Pandora, the first artificial woman in literature. Hesiod tells us that Pandora was molded from clay by Hephaestus and endowed with desirable attributes by all the gods, at the behest of Zeus, who wished to punish men for the gift of fire that Prometheus had given them after stealing its secret from the heavens. The stolen fire has inspired various interpretations, many of which suggest a form of human knowledge or *technics*; thus, the artificial woman was meant to void the progress made from Prometheus's gift. Although Pandora was a "wonder" to behold, she was "sheer guile" (described with the oxymoronic *kalòn kakòn* or "beautiful evil"), an irresistible and deceptive exterior masking a secret horror in the form of a box (or jar) containing sickness, toil, and sorrow. On the orders of Zeus, Hermes offered Pandora as a gift to Prometheus's more gullible brother Epimetheus, who was so entranced by her beauty that he forgot to heed Prometheus's warning to beware all gifts from the king of the gods. And so Pandora entered the human realm and, soon thereafter, incited by curiosity, she opened the box, releasing pain and suffering into the world.

While the Pandora myth is an early reflection of and on the intersection of *technics*, knowledge, and desire, its indictment of women has been its enduring legacy. As Laura Mulvey notes, Pandora is the first in a long history of femme-fatale androids—creatures in which "a beautiful surface that is appealing and charming to man masks either an 'interior' that is mechanical or an outside that is deceitful"; this "inside/outside topography" connotes "mystery" and is "only readable in death" (55). While she mentions the fabricated women in Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novel *Tomorrow's Eve* (*L'Eve future*, 1886), E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman" ("Der Sandmann," 1816), and Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927), one might extrapolate from such early examples to those female WMDs that were a common trope of twentieth-century sf media, typified by the female-android-cum-nuclear-warhead in the 1991 film *Eve of Destruction* and the villainous fembots who took on Jaime Sommers in the original *Bionic Woman* television series (1976-78). They were brought to a parodic extreme by their "bikini machine" and "girl bomb" counterparts in the *Dr. Goldfoot* (1965, 1966) and *Austin Powers* (1997, 2002) films. Such creatures both literalize the notion of the sexual *bombshell* while seeming to corroborate Andreas Huyssen's proposition that within European modernism female sexuality and technology become analogues:

As soon as the machine came to be perceived as a demonic, inexplicable threat and as harbinger of chaos and destruction—a view which typically characterizes many 19th-century reactions to the railroad to give but one major example

—writers began to imagine the *Maschinenmensch* as woman. There are grounds to suspect that we are facing here a complex process of projection and displacement. The fears and perceptual anxieties emanating from ever more powerful machines are recast and reconstructed in terms of the male fear of female sexuality, reflecting, in the Freudian account, the male's castration anxiety. (70)

Mulvey attempts to recuperate the iconography of Pandora and her box from its misogynist legacy by framing it within the context of psychoanalytic feminist theory. In her essay "Pandora's Box: Topographies of Curiosity," she employs Pandora's curious gaze as an intervening agent in the closed circuit that she describes, in her influential 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," between the gaze of the cinematic spectator, understood as both active and masculine, and the passive female image that serves as its object. There is, Mulvey suggests, a self-reflexivity at work in the curious gaze (a gaze often coded as female), a desire to know that is "associated with enclosed, secret, and forbidden spaces" representative of female interiority. So when Pandora looks inside the box, a hidden space that many have read as a synecdoche for female sexuality, she is interrogating the site/sight of sexual difference that she herself represents. Thus, the curious gaze as *epistemophilia* (the desire to know) serves as a challenge to fetishistic *scopophilia* (the desire to see, but not to know) through which the female image is constituted as a sight or "surface that conceals":

While curiosity is a compulsive desire to see and to know, to investigate something secret, fetishism is born out of a refusal to see, a refusal to accept the difference the female body represents for the male. These complex series of turns away, of covering over, not of the eyes but of understanding, of fixating on a substitute object to hold the gaze, leave the female body as an enigma and threat, condemned to return as a symbol of anxiety while simultaneously being transformed into its own screen in representation. (64)

While Mulvey draws a binary distinction between knowledge and desire in an attempt to reclaim the "inside/outside topography" of the artificial female, other critics have questioned the relevance of both topographical and corporeal binarisms, as well as the epistemology of fetishism, in relation to both cyberbodies and the crisis of representation within the postmodern imaginary. Thomas Foster, for example, reflecting on the sexy robots and gynoids of the Japanese artist, Hajime Sorayama (see figure 1), asks whether their explicit foregrounding of both technology and sexuality is reducible to traditional ideas around fetishistic disavowal: "If anything, these images represent technology as the truth of sexuality, and this inversion of the modernist tradition Huyssen defines produces anxieties that cannot be entirely or safely framed by the fetishism the images evoke" (101).¹

If such technofetishistic imagery undercuts the psychoanalytic model of fetishism, however, it is by pushing "the logic of fetishism to a point of crisis" (Foster 98), inspiring an ambivalence and confusion that has haunted technologically-mediated bodies ever since Donna Haraway first suggested their critical potential in her "Cyborg Manifesto" (1985). Although Haraway heralded



Figure 1: Gynoid by Hajime Sorayama

the possibilities of both “cyborg writing” and “cyborg imagery” for offering “a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (181), many critics have noted the difficulty of realizing a simultaneously female and post-gendered body, particularly in the visual field.

Claudia Springer, for example, draws attention to the cyberbodies in film and cyberpunk sf, which “appear masculine or feminine to an exaggerated degree. We find giant pumped-up pectoral muscles on the males and enormous breasts on the females” (66). Similarly, Anne Balsamo comments on the extent to which gender remains one of the more resilient markers of difference in the portrayal of technologically enhanced bodies:

As is often the case when seemingly stable boundaries are displaced by technological innovation (human/artificial, life/death, nature/culture), other boundaries are more vigilantly guarded. Indeed, the gendered boundary between male and female is one border that remains heavily guarded despite new technologized ways to rewrite the physical body in the flesh. (9)

Although for Haraway “cyborg sex” conjures “the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates (such nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism)” (150), its visual interpretation seems to align more readily with the cyborgian nightmare depicted in Shinya Tsukamoto’s cyberpunk film *Tetsuo* (1989), in which a salaryman becomes perforated from the inside out by rapidly advancing metallic probes, whose mutating offshoots converge into a gigantic power drill with which he impales his lover. While *Tetsuo* offers a hyperbolic (and humorous) example of the technofetishistic imaginary, it also underscores an interpretive dilemma in relation to the technological displacement of bodies and sexualities in the visual field: are they to be understood as compensatory or strategic? Do we read the metallic “member” as an avowal or a return of the repressed, phallocentrism or a commentary on phallocentrism? Foster notes similar confusion around Sorayama’s robotic and cyborg bodies: “these images make it impossible to determine whether the sexy robot is a fetish object or a woman who has been fetishized” (102). Moreover, he points out that, even when the technological mediation of bodies destabilizes traditional categories of gender and sexuality, it is difficult to escape the feedback loop of castration anxiety since “fetishism paradoxically uses ambivalence and a blurring of gender or sexual categories to defend against the anxieties created by the breakdown of such

categories" (82). The ability to maintain the kind of ironic stance encouraged by Haraway in relation to technofetishistic imagery, as Foster notes, thus "seems to depend on the assumption that this technology and its popular imaging will not or cannot be 'psychoanalytically framed'" (98).

Foster points to the work of E.L. McCallum as a potential starting point for approaching technofetishism outside of the Freudian model. McCallum proposes a reconsideration of the discourse around fetishism, which, she reminds us, came of age with modernism and, particularly, with the rise of sexology, as a means of marking sexual differences and making categorical distinctions between the normative and deviant. She notes that while fetishism, within its narrow definition as a fixation, seems to work in opposition to the crisis of representation within postmodernity, "[t]his view reflects the fact that fetishism itself has come to be fetishized" (xv)—that is, fixed in meaning in a way that offers little theoretical wiggle room. By thinking *through* the fetishistic relationship—in which pleasure is courted despite "ambivalence, indeterminacy, and contradiction"—rather than merely *about* the fetish object, McCallum suggests that, far from serving as a screen against *epistemophilia*, fetishism can provide an alternative epistemological model for exploring the connections between subjects and objects, desire and knowledge (xvi).

In this essay, I follow the lead of both Foster and McCallum in an attempt to think *through* the technofetishistic relationship with the machine woman, as well as *about* the visual representations of machine bodies that are an outgrowth of that relationship, using as a springboard a little-known community of technosexuals with whom I have had contact, on and off, for nearly a decade.² It was an act of Pandora-like curiosity that first led me to the community: spurred by the saying that "if you enter any object in a search engine followed by the word 'sex,' you will find people who fetishize that object," I typed "robot" and "sex" into a search engine and, sure enough, found websites created by groups of people who collectively fantasize about, among other things, robots (many of whom found one another in the same way that I found them). While some do refer to themselves as "technosexuals," many call the fetish itself A.S.F.R., an acronym for alt.sex.fetish.robots, the name of the now-defunct Usenet newsgroup where members originally congregated online. Although A.S.F.R. was made possible by the advent of virtual communities, its fetishistic interests have historical antecedents that were documented in the early literature of sexology. Against their classifications of similar fetishistic practices as variations of necrophilia, as well as subsequent Freudian interpretations, I will argue that A.S.F.R. is less *about* technology in general, or the artificial woman in particular, than it is a strategy of denaturalization that uses the trope of technological "programming" to underscore subjecthood. Like the trope of "hardwiring"—which Foster discusses as a signal within cyberpunk of the constitution of bodies and identities in relation to "preexisting systems of control and power, as figured" for example "by the invisible computer network of *Neuromancer*'s cyberspace" (74)—"programming" serves as a metaphor for the biological and cultural matrices within which desire is articulated and pursued. "ASFRians" experience pleasure and agency through, in a sense, hacking the system, the visual indicators of which often take the form

of a female android who has run amok—an image that, in Freudian terms, emblemizes male castration anxiety. A.S.F.R. thus complicates the binary relationship between fetishism and curiosity proposed by Mulvey, while corroborating Foster’s claim that technofetishistic imagery has the potential to foreground “the problematic status of psychoanalytic categories and arguments within technocultural contexts” (95).

I argue that in its attempt to unmask the artificial body (through physical breakdown), the ASFRian gaze is less aligned to fetishistic *scopophilia*—the desire to see but not to know, which is generally read in relation to the cohesive male subject—than with the self-reflexive curiosity of Pandora, the desire to see beneath the seen. Indeed, it embodies the etymological essence of curiosity as *cura*, the Latin word for care, which vacillates between its usage as a noun (meaning anxiety or sorrow) and a verb (meaning to provide relief or ministrations). Curiosity often involves looking at that which causes anxiety rather than pleasure, and thus it stems from an impulse different from the visual delectation of the beautiful image. St. Augustine pejoratively referred to it as “the eyes’ urges” in his *Confessions*, explaining that while the beautiful inspires the body to delight in sensual pleasures, *curiositas* “experiments with their opposites, not submitting to the gross for its own sake, but from the drive to experience and know” (240). It is *curiositas* that compels human beings to look at those things that make them shudder, the ultimate example of which is, according to Augustine, the mutilated corpse:

This is something [in terms of sensual pleasure] they do not want to see even in dreams, or if forced to look at it while awake, or if lured to the sight expecting something pretty.... It is for this perverse craving that unnatural things are put on in the theater. This also leads men to pry into the arcane elements of nature, which are beyond our scope—knowing them would serve no purpose, yet men make of that knowing its own purpose. (245)

Any act of looking that involves prying into things that are “beyond our scope” or “ken” raises the specter of the uncanny, a word that, according to Victoria Nelson, is etymologically rooted in “that which cannot be ‘kenned’ or known by the five senses” and that, by definition, is “beyond what is normal or expected” (17). In his essay “The Uncanny” (1919), Freud discusses the term’s relevance for psychoanalysis, using as a primary example Hoffmann’s story “The Sandman,” in which, significantly, a man falls in love with a mechanical woman. Freud, however, dismisses the relevance of the android female in order to prove that the origin of uncanniness lies beyond what he calls “the pleasure principle.” The fetishistic use of the uncanny android body by ASFRians raises questions about Freud’s analysis that have relevance for the critical understanding of artificial bodies in popular culture both past and present. In order to pursue these questions, I draw analogies between the uncanny artificial bodies at the heart of ASFRian fantasy and those fetishized by the Surrealists, in particular the disarticulated dolls of German artist Hans Bellmer, as well as those within the current technosphere as exemplified by Mamoru Oshii’s cyberpunk anime *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004), which was deeply influenced by Bellmer’s work.

Alt.sex.fetish.robots. The originary myth of the group A.S.F.R. is that it was started as a joke. The Usenet site, however, began to attract a loyal following of participants, primarily men, who had a secret attraction to the mechanical and the robotic. Many of them had believed that they were alone in their sexual preferences, and the site provided a sense of relief and community, a place to share their interests and compare notes with others, as well as a definitive name for the ill-defined feelings that they had been harboring in isolation. Although the acronym privileges robots, A.S.F.R. is, in fact, a blanket designation for a range of different fetishes, which includes sexual attraction to mannequins, dolls, and sculpture, as well as to real people acting like mannequins, puppets, dolls, or robots, being hypnotized, turned into statues, or immobilized or frozen in a variety of ways. While all of these fetishes were explored on the original newsgroup, many of their fans later splintered off and founded websites geared to their specific interests. They do, however, still consider themselves to be “ASFRian” and acknowledge their point of common interest: the thematic of programmatic control—whether imagined as hypnotism, magic, a puppet-master, or artificial intelligence—of a human object. When taken in this sense alone, A.S.F.R. strikes the imagination as a technological elaboration of standard BDSM (bondage-domination-sado-masochism) fantasies, in which one person dominates another for sexual pleasure. ASFRians are, in fact, sensitive to (and some might even agree with) this interpretation of their fetish, as well as the perception that it represents the reification of normative gender ideals (for when many first hear about the fetish—myself included—they imagine that, for ASFRians, desire is contingent on replacing a human subject with a vacant Stepford Wife or Husband, who mindlessly fulfills the orders of its master, both sexual and domestic). Indeed, it is this common assumption about their fetish that, according to ASFRians, necessitates its obscurity and keeps its members highly closeted in comparison to fetishists like the Furies and the Plushies (those who eroticize anthropomorphic and stuffed animals and animal costumes, respectively), who hold dozens of public conventions each year throughout the world. ASFRians are so concerned about the accusation of sadism or misogyny that they have coined a mantra or tagline, oft repeated on their websites: “ASFR is not about the objectification of women, it’s about the feminization of objects.”³

Aside from raising obvious questions about the extent to which the feminization of objects can be extricated from the objectification of women, the mantra does not so much clarify the fetish as strategically redirect it from the living to the nonliving. In so doing, it raises the specter of necrophilia, which is the lens through which the sexualization of artificial humans has been viewed since the establishment of sexology as a field of study, when “sexual pathologies” were first documented and catalogued. Although mention is made in Krafft-Ebing’s landmark *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) of a “paraphilia” involving statues, including a reported incident of a gardener attempting to fornicate with a replica of the Venus de Milo (525), Iwan Bloch explores the preference for the artificial at greater length in *The Sexual Life of Our Time In Its Relation to Modern Civilization* (1928). In a chapter dedicated to sexual perversity, he highlights two variations of necrophilia, the first being “Venus Statuaria,” the

desire to have sexual intercourse with statues or other representations of human beings, a passion that he states can seize some merely by walking through a museum. The second, "Pygmalionism," is the desire to enact the animation of an inanimate statue, usually by having real women stand atop pedestals pretending to be statues and then gradually come to life. Such a request was, Bloch suggests, common in Parisian brothels at the turn of the century.⁴ Connected to the desire for statues is, according to Bloch, the use of new technologies to construct anatomically-correct human models for explicitly sexual ends:

There exist true Vaucansons in this province of pornographic technology, clever mechanics who, from rubber and other plastic materials, prepare entire male or female bodies, which, as *hommes* or *dames de voyage*, subserve fornicatory purposes. More especially are the genital organs represented in a manner true to nature. Even the secretion of Bartholin's glands is imitated, by means of a "pneumatic tube" filled with oil. Similarly, by means of fluid and suitable apparatus, the ejaculation of the semen is imitated. Such artificial human beings are actually offered for sale in the catalogue of certain manufacturers of "Parisian rubber articles." (648)

While in the case of "Venus Statuaria" Bloch makes a distinction between those who become sexually aroused by statues *because* they are artificial and those merely responding to a naked human body *despite* its artificiality (the latter of whom he suggests comprise the bulk of the documented cases), in general he tends to collapse distinctions between the various desires that circulate around the inanimate and to suggest that they are all equally perverse. Moreover, he treats such tendencies as a separate topic from fetishism, a category that he reserves for those who invest sexual energy in a part of the human body at the expense of the whole.⁵

Writing in the 1970s, A. Scobie and A.J.W. Taylor draw a greater distinction between "agalmatophilia" or the love of statues and Pygmalionism, the desire to bring a statue *to life* (49), while Murray White, whose article appeared three years after their study, dismisses agalmatophilia entirely, stating that a negligible number of cases has been cited over the course of two thousand years, none of which are verifiable. Moreover, he attributes the interest in the phenomenon to the "insatiable preoccupation with deviant nosology" of sexologists in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (248), many of whom, in their own fetishistic zeal, failed to make the distinction between fantasy and reality:

Agalmatophilia has been sparingly treated as a pornographic fantasy, but there is very little evidence supporting its status as a behavioral perversion. Early scientific researchers of sexual behavior appear to have sometimes confused fantasy (the process of imagining objects or events in terms of imagery) with perversion (sexual behavior which differs widely from normal standards and which is typically prohibited by law). (249)

The constellation of artificial love schematized by Bloch has, however, been revived by Patricia Pulham, who suggests that the current popularity of life-sized silicone lovedolls, such as the Realdoll, indicates that with the help of new technologies, "agalmatophiliacs are alive and well, even if their objects of desire seem somewhat dead" (13).⁶ Drawing on Meghan Laslocky's interviews with

Realdoll owners documented in her 2005 *Salon.com* article “Just Like a Woman,” Pulham compares the lovers of silicone dolls with both Pygmalion and Lord Ewald in Villiers de l’Isle Adam’s *Tomorrow’s Eve*, and she suggests that while some men attempt to enliven their dolls through a variety of techniques, including heating the silicone skin before engaging in physical contact, the resonances between their desires and necrophilia are “difficult to ignore” (14).⁷

Her views are, in fact, echoed in the first film to use a Realdoll as a character, *Love Object* (2003). A horror film that was, according to writer-director Robert Parigi, inspired by the visual similarity between Realdolls and the dead bodies that he had witnessed on a visit to the morgue, *Love Object* centers on a shy office worker who has a silicone lovedoll made in the image of a female coworker (named Lisa Bellmer, a reference to the dolls of Hans Bellmer, discussed below) on whom he has a crush.⁸ At first it appears that the doll will serve as a successful transitional object to real women (a role that a Realdoll will later fulfill in the 2007 film *Lars and the Real Girl*); as he wines, dines, and otherwise engages his doll in a typical courting ritual, he gains an experiential confidence that enables him to relax around and ultimately start dating the woman on whom she has been modeled. The film suggests, however, that whatever pathology enabled him to invest life in a dead thing has a life of its own that requires an empty vessel for its fulfillment; and, since he disposed of the doll after he started to date the woman, he attempts to de-animate the woman through plastination in the story’s horrifying climax.⁹

While there are clearly areas of overlap in the various desires around artificial bodies, the ongoing development of technologies for meeting such desires, as well as for the anonymous sharing of preferences within networked communities (the specificities of which tend to evolve in relation to one another), has made it somewhat easier to chart their distinctions. My own interviews with the buyers of life-sized silicone lovedolls and with ASFRians, and perusal of their respective websites, have led me to believe that, in general, they are two distinct groups.¹⁰ Moreover, while “death” in general, and the “death drive” in particular, are of relevance to their proclivities (as I will discuss below), necrophilia is too reductive and misleading a term for understanding the broad spectrum of behavior associated with either.¹¹ Considering ASFRians in and of themselves, it is somewhat difficult to generalize (other than the fact that, with a small number of exceptions, they are predominantly male). As one member of the message board Fembot Central wrote in answer to one of my queries:

the characteristics that any one of us “fetishizes” is always different—and often to a large degree—from anyone else’s. But also, the psychological undertones and the way we integrate this into our lives is entirely individual. The common ground is pretty small. In the broadest sense, I suspect that each of us here can agree with the broad definition, “I am attracted to things that look like people but aren’t.” And that each of us will further want to qualify that assertion in some way that we feel is important. (online communication, 17 June 2009)¹²

Although meaning does vary from one individual to another, the group makes a distinction between two (somewhat oppositional) tendencies, the first indicating the desire for a robot that is entirely artificial (“built”) and the second devoted to

the metamorphosis between the human and the robotic (“transformation”). Nevertheless, there are certain kinds of images and erotic practices that appeal to both groups and that appear repeatedly in relation to the fetish. For example, scenarios in which a real person is acting the part of a robot would likely be of interest to both groups, albeit for different reasons. Indeed, the majority of the ASFRians that I interviewed described their earliest fetishistic experiences as occurring while watching actors and actresses playing robots on such sf television shows as *The Twilight Zone* (1959-64), *Outer Limits* (1963-65), and *Star Trek* (1966-69). Moreover, the primary indicators of mechanicity on such shows, which include silver and gold costuming and mechanical behavioral mannerisms like robotic speech, stilted movement, and repetitive motion, often enacted within moments of transition (such as when a robot is booted up, shut down, or programmed) are equally exciting to both groups. A large part of ASFRian activity revolves around the recreation in private of both the costuming and performances of these actor robots, giving the fetish a kind of do-it-yourself quality on which Katherine Gates comments in her book *Deviant Desires*. Gates places A.S.F.R. alongside slash fandom as a group that appropriates sf effects in homemade productions to their own erotic ends; ASFRians often write their own stories, create their own pictures, and construct their own robot costumes using shiny materials like latex, PVC, and Lycra to which they attach toys that “blink, bobble, and glow” in order to create the illusion of circuitry (229).

The emphasis on mechanicity complicates the relationship between ASFRian fantasy and the reality of artificial companions that achieve human verisimilitude; in fact, the state of tension and liminality—whether between the robotic and human or between control and loss of control, appearance and interior, motion and stasis—seems to have greater relevance to the fetish than the robot per se. As Gates notes, unmasking is a key aspect of the fetish, and many of the most exciting fantasies involve the sudden revelation of artificiality either through robotic malfunction (in which a human/robot gets caught in a repeat loop) or disassembly (in which a panel opens or a part is removed to reveal the circuitry beneath the semblance of humanity). While the latter is difficult to perform, ASFRians either search television and film for such moments (which they then list obsessively on their websites) or they produce disassembly images themselves in the manner of ASFRian artist Kishin, who either renders them from scratch in a 3D program or adds exposed circuitry to figures from erotic magazines using Photoshop, a practice that some call “rasterbation” (see figure 2). When I asked Kishin what it was about such imagery that he most enjoyed, he replied, “It’s something about the contrast between the cold hard steel and the circuits and the wiring and the smooth skin and the soft flesh.” The “come shot” for Kishin occurs when a female robot reaches up “to remove the mask that is her face” because “it’s like a revelation of who she really is” (personal communication, 24 July 2001).

But Who is She Really? In his essay “Fetishism” (1927), Freud tells us that in all cases a fetish is “a substitute for the woman’s (mother’s) phallus, which the little boy once believed in and does not wish to forego” (205-206). It embodies

an ambivalence, a double attitude towards female castration for which a compromise is struck by which the absent phallus is conjured elsewhere, a new point of erotic fixation that serves as both an acknowledgement and denial, “a sort of permanent memorial” that may manifest itself in a single part, like a foot, which the fetishist then worships, or a set of opposing attitudes that involve both hostility and reverence, such as “the Chinese custom of first mutilating a woman’s foot and then revering it” (209).

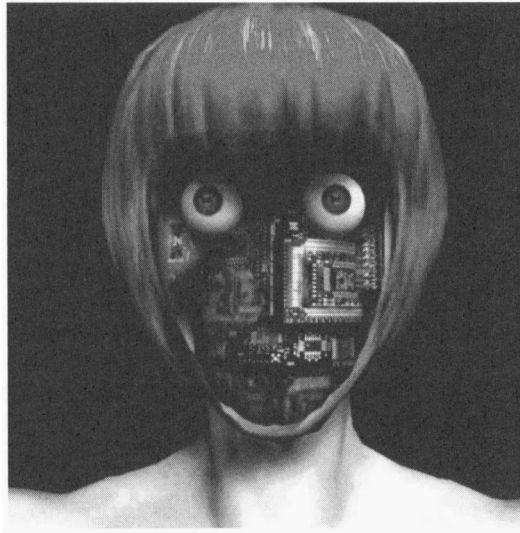


Figure 2: Kishin: “Who She Really Is”

The ASFRian fetish object is, however, less a “permanent memorial” than a vacillating sign; it is, to use Freud’s analogy, like mutilating one foot while keeping the other whole, an ongoing reminder that a deformation has occurred. To the extent that it attempts to assuage the ambivalence around an absence via a displaced presence, it also repetitively restages the exchange between presence and absence at this alternate location, re-enacting the trauma by which it was, theoretically, constituted. In this sense, it smacks of the compulsion to repeat that Freud links to the “death instinct.” Indeed, there is a distinct similarity between the hiding and revealing of the mechanical interior of the robot female in ASFRian fantasy and the compulsive throwing away and retrieving of the wooden reel by the child in the game *fort/da*, described by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (13-14).¹³ There is, moreover, a correspondence between repetition compulsion and what is being revealed—the “who she really is” of ASFRian fantasy—that is bound up less in technology per se than in automatism, the revelation of a force (imagined as programming by ASFRians) beyond the rational mind or conscious will that controls behavior, and that is brought to the fore in moments of robotic unveiling or breakdown. Gates argues that the automatism at the heart of the fetish is a metaphor for sexuality itself: “the sense that we have no control over it; that we respond mechanically to stimuli; and that

our sexual programming makes us helpless. Fetishes, especially, are a kind of hard-wired sexual subroutine" (228). In this sense, the erotics of automatism, as embraced by A.S.F.R., is a fetish whose object is, in part, a revelation of the compulsive mechanism of fetishism itself.

Read more generally, however, A.S.F.R. not only points to the slippage between the subject and object of fetishism, but also to the ways in which the circuit between them is wired with both biological and cultural contact points, the exposure of which is potentially denaturalizing (for the object) and self-revelatory (for the subject). For example, while many ASFRians are fascinated by the film *The Stepford Wives* (1975; remade 2004), for many its primary interest resides less in the idea of the perfect housewife than in those scenes in which the Wives break down or become caught in a repeat loop—scenes beneath which foreboding music plays and that are intended to evoke horror. These are moments of vertiginous rupture that offer a glimpse of the robotic programming beneath the ideal exterior of the Wives and that also throw into relief the cultural norms through which such ideals are constructed. Indeed, in the film, such scenes serve as feminist commentary on the extent to which real women (and men) have been socially programmed. A connection is also made in the original film between the domestic scripting of women and television advertising; many of the Stepford Wives speak as though they are actresses in commercials for household products.

It is, perhaps, of no small significance that ASFRians get particular pleasure out of those scenes in which normative gender roles, as shaped by media imagery and embodied by the female android, are short-circuited. Most of the ASFRians whom I interviewed came of age in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and while their fetish is a product of sf television shows, it is also a reaction to a historical and cultural moment in which mass consciousness was shaped by the centralizing force of media programming and advertising. Indeed, if the media in general, and television in particular, tend to codify normative social rules and behaviors, then science fiction stands out as a site where the normal rules are suspended and other worlds are imagined that, in many cases, serve as a critique of and an alternative to the conventions of our own world. Although one might apply the stereotype of the sf geek to many ASFRians, the shared attributes that stood out in the men I interviewed were a high degree of sensitivity and self-consciousness coupled with social awkwardness and difficulty reading social cues.¹⁴ Puberty was, for these men, an unusually fraught time during which they felt both confused by and compelled to conform to the rules of social engagement and political correctness. Interestingly, many of the ASFRians I interviewed considered themselves to be feminists—after all, many had come of age at the height of second-wave feminism—but they expressed confusion about how to reconcile the way they were raised—i.e., "to respect women"—with their sexual impulses.

The female robot is, to some extent, a way out of the quandary: she represents the promise of a simplified playing field in which the rules of the game are programmed in advance, thus sidestepping gender politics and eliminating the anxiety of making social mistakes. Within that simplified playing field, however, ASFRians imagine endless concatenations of possible moves, the erotic loci of which are moments of tension and rupture between opposite states—the human

and the artificial, control and loss of control, exterior and interior. Such rupture is, I would argue, both a metaphor for and a condensation of the eruptive effects of adolescent desire on the socially-regulated body; it is a re-enactment of the tension between biological and social programming, between the chaotic flux of inner experience and the unified and controlled self as mandated by the social order. Moreover, to the extent that it is an attempt at their reconciliation, it is through recourse to a third category, which has the potential to destabilize such dualisms as self and other, subject and object, and even male and female.

Technology, in this sense, signals both the desire for and identification with an Other, a slippage made particularly apparent in one of the media examples cited most often as relevant to the fetish, an episode from the first season of *The Twilight Zone* entitled "The Lonely" (1959). The story takes place in the year 2046 on a barren and desolate asteroid nine million miles from earth, which serves as solitary confinement for a convicted criminal named James A. Corry. When the episode opens, a supply ship, which makes occasional visits to the planet, is arriving, and the captain, who has taken pity on the isolated prisoner, has left behind a box that he instructs Corry not to open until after the ship has departed. When Corry does open it, he finds a lifelike female android named Alicia, programmed to keep him company. While at first he wants nothing to do with her, his need for companionship prevails and he starts to forget her mechanical nature and eventually falls in love with her. The next time the supply ship arrives, the captain informs Corry that he has been pardoned and can return home immediately. As the prisoner rushes excitedly towards the ship with his companion, however, the captain informs him that there is not enough room for the android. Corry argues with him, insisting that Alicia is not an android but a woman, *his* woman, but the captain stands firm and, in order to wake Corry up to reality, pulls out his gun and shoots Alicia in the face. In the final scene, the female android breaks down; her calls for Corry get slower and s-l-o-w-e-r as broken circuitry and loose wiring shoot off a few last sparks of life through the hole where her face had been (see figure 3).

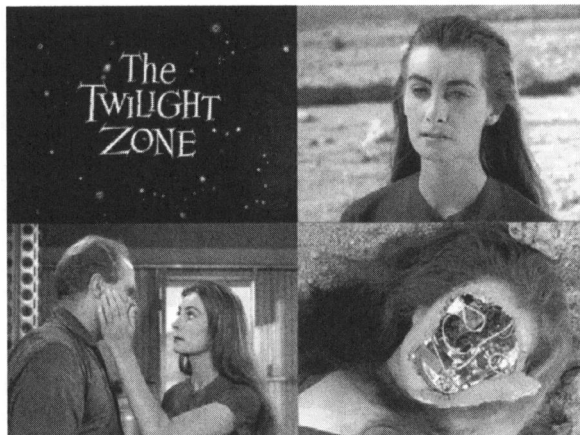


Figure 3: *Twilight Zone*, "The Lonely" (1959)

The narrative climax of “The Lonely” corresponds with the primary visual triggers of ASFRian desire—breakdown, disassembly, and unmasking. The android’s exposed inner workings are, however, not so much a revelation as a remembering; Corry already knew that Alicia was a robot, and thus what lies behind her faceplate is integrally connected to the mechanism inside him that made him forget or, to put it in terms of the fetishistic relationship, that sustained his belief that she was a woman despite the knowledge that she was a robot. This visual reminder of his own psychic split is what Lacan calls the *objet petit a* or the *agalma* (by which he means a hidden yet alluring object that animates desire, but which is, notably, the Greek word for statue and the root of *agalmatophilia*). Lacan associates the *objet petit a* with the game *fort/da*, claiming that the spool on the string can best be understood not as a little mother, but as “a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained” (Four 62). Freud associates the return of the once familiar forgotten with the uncanny, an aesthetic term on which he elaborates psychoanalytically in reference to Hoffman’s story “The Sandman,” whose climactic scene—in which the eyes of the mechanical woman, Olympia, are removed and she is revealed as an automaton—bears a distinct resemblance to the climax of “The Lonely.” The uncanny is in this way a term and an experience of particular relevance to the “who she really is” of ASFRian fantasy.

The Uncanny Gynoid. Freud uses as a starting point for his psychoanalytical inquiry into the uncanny a study entitled “The Psychology of the Uncanny” by physician Ernst Anton Jentsch, published in 1906. For Jentsch, the uncanny is a function of *misoneism* (the fear of the new), in which the mind becomes disoriented in relation to a phenomenon that does not conform to one’s established conceptual framework or “ideational sphere” (8). It is Jentsch who initially links the uncanny to the German word *unheimlich*, the opposite of that with which one is familiar, the “heimlich” (homely) or *heimisch* (native) in German, and who uses Hoffmann’s story as a significant example of the uncanny since:

Among all the psychical uncertainties that can become an original cause of the uncanny feeling, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate. (Jentsch 11)

Freud picks up where Jentsch leaves off but differs from Jentsch in his interpretation of the source of the uncanny. While for Jentsch the uncanny is rooted in uncertainty about something unknown, Freud insists that what makes this unknown thing frightening is the fact that it was once *known*, but has returned in an alienated form. While there is no more *Unheimlich* place than the female genitals—that “entrance to the former Heim of all human beings, to the place where everyone dwelt once upon a time in the beginning” (245)—this interpretation, interestingly, leads Freud away from the figure of the female automaton in Hoffmann’s story and the emphasis placed on her in Jentsch’s essay. According to Freud, the mystery surrounding Olympia is of less significance to

the story's ability to elicit an uncanny sensation than the theme of the "Sandman," a mythological figure who steals the eyes of bad children while they are sleeping, and whose image haunts the protagonist, Nathanael, throughout the story. Uncanniness is based in the anxiety of losing one's sight, which is a substitute for the fear of castration and steeped in Oedipal drama. As Freud points out, Nathanael's anxiety about the Sandman (and losing his eyes) is intimately connected in the story with his father's death (his father dies mysteriously in the company of the frightening lawyer Coppelius, whom Nathanael associates with the Sandman). Moreover, there is a reoccurrence and doubling of characters: Nathanael's father is replaced by Spalanzani, the "father" of Olympia; the Sandman is Coppelius, who is also Coppola, the peddler who sells Nathanael the spyglass or "pocket perspective" through which he first sees Olympia. These doublings are linked to a theme of eyes: Coppola, whose name translates to *coppo* or "eye socket" in Italian, also made the eyes of Olympia, which he later steals back. All connect back, in a logically circular way, to Freud's overall premise that the uncanny effects of similar occurrences are related to repressed infantile sexuality.

Freud's marginalization of Olympia has been a point of great contestation, and many have argued that Olympia represents the repressed within Freud's theory of the uncanny. As Nicholas Royle puts it:

Freud's reading of "The Sandman" is a violent attempt to reduce or eliminate the significance of Jentsch's work on the Uncanny, and in particular the importance of the figures of the doll and automaton for an understanding of the uncanny. It is also a violent attempt to reduce or eliminate the place and importance of women.... Freud failed to see that the question of woman is inextricably connected to Nathaniel's fear of castration. (41)¹⁵

An intentionality begins to take shape, however, when we consider that Freud is drawing our attention away from the visual ambiguity of Olympia's physicality towards the psychic register of the story's (imaginary) Sandman. Freud, in a sense, replaces vision with the symbolism of eyes, in this way moving within the etiology of hysteria, an illness that serves as the backdrop of Olympia's behavior and Nathanael's madness. Our first clue to the importance of hysteria in Freud's reading of the uncanny is his rationale for dismissing Olympia as a symbol of infantile sexuality. While Freud acknowledges that Olympia does evoke a sense of the uncanny, he suggests that it arises not from the return of the *repressed*, but from the return of the *surmounted*. The return of the repressed involves the revival of infantile complexes, or amputated aspects of oneself, which had been buried in the unconscious. The return of the surmounted involves discarded beliefs that are "primitive" or "animistic" in nature. When something happens that we cannot explain—for example, a coincidence of events, the manifestation of secret desires or thoughts, the animation of an inanimate body—it revives and brings into expression these old beliefs, raising doubts about our current material reality and creating a sense of the uncanny. Accordingly, the return of the surmounted tends to operate in the realm of reality more than fiction, where supernatural events are less unusual.

Olympia is, of course, fictional, but to the extent that her mechanical behavior strikes a supernatural chord, it evokes the real uncanniness of the hysterical body, whose paroxysmal and repetitive gestures seem animated by unseen forces. Jentsch draws an explicit association between the two, suggesting that while the automaton strikes some people more than others as uncanny, the uncanniness of a mental and nervous illness, such as epilepsy or hysteria, is nearly universal, since it renders the autonomous human subject mechanical or puppet-like:

It is not unjustly that epilepsy is therefore spoken of as the *morbus sacer*, as an illness deriving not from the human world but from foreign and enigmatic spheres, for the epileptic attack of spasms reveals the human body to the viewer—the body under normal conditions is so meaningful, expedient, and unitary, functioning according to the direction of his consciousness—as an immensely complicated and delicate mechanism. This is an important cause of the epileptic fit's ability to produce such a demonic effect on those who see it. (14)

It is because of its mechanical seizures, paradigmatically associated with grotesque body movements—such as spasms, convulsions, and catalepsy—that hysteria inspired varying interpretations about its animating force over the course of its history, reaching a low point in the late fifteenth century with the publication of the handbook for witch-hunters and Inquisitors, *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), in which it was interpreted as a form of Satanic possession. Although the etiology of hysteria began to shift with the birth of modern medicine, the man who freed it, once and for all, from its association with animist superstition was the famous neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), whose theatrical displays of hysteria at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris in the late nineteenth century became legendary and with whom Freud studied between 1885 and 1886.¹⁶ There is, in fact, a significant parallel between Freud's redirection of our attention from the mechanical body of the female automaton in "The Sandman" and his shift in emphasis from the external symptoms of hysteria charted by Charcot to an exploration of internal psychic processes, a shift that directly paved the way for his development of psychoanalysis.

Charcot is, perhaps, most remembered as the man who not only tamed hysteria but also theatricalized it, transforming a cacophony of symptomatic gestures into a choreographed ballet whose movements could be anticipated and, as was often the case, provoked. His legacy includes both the unprecedented photographic document of hysterical symptoms, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1876-77, 1878, 1879-80), and the famous Tuesday lessons in which he hypnotized patients, who then dutifully performed their symptoms before an audience of "literary men, artists, art critics, actors and politicians" (Schade 505). If, in fact, fetishism is grounded in condensing and fixing that which causes anxiety in a form that can be performed repeatedly for visual pleasure, then Charcot could be called hysteria's pornographer. As Freud would later state in his obituary for Charcot:

He was not a reflective man, not a thinker: he had the nature of an artist—he was, as he himself said, a *visuel*, a man who sees. Here is what he himself told us about his method for working. He used to look again and again at the things he did not understand, to deepen his impression of them day by day, till suddenly an

understanding of them dawned on him. In his mind's eye the apparent chaos presented by the continual repetition of the same symptoms then gave way to order.... He called this kind of intellectual work, in which he had no equal, "practicing nosography," and he took pride in it. He might be heard to say that the greatest satisfaction a man could have was *to see something new*. (qtd in de Marnaffe 92; emphasis added)¹⁷

Charcot's nosography, dedicated as it was to an unflinching vision that saw "something new," an intelligible order, within the unknown and visually chaotic, poses an answer not only to the indecipherability of hysterical symptoms, but to the uncanny as *misoneism* (the fear of the new) through which they are rendered demonic.

In domesticating and aestheticizing the unassimilable and frightening, Charcot produced the kind of theater through which the uncanny is rendered both pleasurable and cathartic; and this is precisely the role of the fictional uncanny, according to Ernst Jentsch, of which Hoffmann was a master:

In life we do not like to expose ourselves to severe emotional blows, but in the theatre or while reading we gladly let ourselves be influenced in this way: we hereby experience certain powerful excitements which awake in us a strong feeling for life, without having to accept the consequences of the causes of the unpleasant moods if they were to have the opportunity to appear in corresponding form on their own account, so to speak. In physiological terms, the sensation of such excitements seems frequently to be bound up with artistic pleasure in a direct way. (12)

The theatrical framing of the uncanny, through which the spectator experiences dissimulation as pleasure, is related to the fetishistic pleasure that Nathanael experiences in his encounter with the female automaton, whose embodiment of both the human and artificial, the living and dead, strikes profound chords within him. In a similar manner to ASFRians, Nathanael is erotically drawn to those qualities in Olympia that others find inhuman: her stiff and measured gait and mechanical movements appear to him as ciphers of hidden meaning; her repetitive and vacuous utterances strike him as "genuine hieroglyphs of the inner world of Love and of the higher cognition of the intellectual life revealed in the intuition of the Eternal beyond the grave" (Hoffmann 207-208). Unlike ASFRians, however, he is driven mad by the revelation, at the end of the story, of the subjectivity that he has invested in the object of his love, a revelation that leads to his suicide. It is this madness, which Jentsch celebrates in Hoffmann's work, that Freud is interested in extracting from the visual and the aesthetic in his theorization of the uncanny. Freud is, in a sense, attempting to isolate that which leads to Nathanael's death rather than the mediated experience of death enjoyed by the viewer (or reader).

Moreover, Freud's insistence that we ignore the automaton in our attempt to understand the causes of the uncanny is, I would suggest, related to the extent to which Charcot's visual approach to hysteria occluded the real causes of the ailment. Although Charcot was able to find meaning in visual disorder, he discounted that which was most meaningful—what his patients were saying—as delirious banter. Freud, however, subsequent to his studies with Charcot, began

in his private practice to listen for the psychological content of what his patients were saying, ultimately concluding that their hysterical symptoms were the result of sexually-based trauma that was repressed, displaced from the lower body regions, and somatically converted into motor activity.¹⁸ And in lieu of hypnosis, which Charcot had so theatrically induced in his patients before a crowd of onlookers, he prescribed “the talking cure” through which access was gained to the analysand’s “private theatre” only within the context of the psychoanalytic relationship.¹⁹

Aside from its larger implications in the development of the field of psychoanalysis, this core insight about the etiology of hysteria serves as the backdrop for Freud’s interpretation of the uncanny as the return of repressed infantile sexuality and his insistence that we turn our attention away from the visual signs of Olympia’s ambiguous nature, suggestive of supernatural influences, towards the symbolic register of Nathanael’s castration anxiety, enacted through a narrative doubling in the form of the Sandman.

Unlike Jentsch, who is interested in the aesthetics of the uncanny and how something frightening in real life can be rendered pleasurable within art and literature, Freud is interested in linking the uncanny to a psychological drive that overrides the pursuit of pleasure. He will call this the “death instinct” in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), a book that served as the impetus for his essay “On the Uncanny” (1919)—the latter was written between drafts of the former and published the year before—as well as a reworking of his theory of the drives. Early in the book, he states that while the enjoyment derived from “painful experiences” in the theater or art hints at that which he is addressing, they “are of no use for *our* purposes, since they presuppose the existence and dominance of the pleasure principle; they give no evidence of the operation of tendencies *beyond* the pleasure principle, that is, of tendencies more primitive than it and independent of it” (17; emphases in original). In elaborating on the compulsion to repeat at the heart of the death drive, Freud once again passes over the mechanical body of hysteria and uses as an example the traumatic dreams of soldiers returned from battle (with whom he had direct experience following World War I). Freud concludes that the repetitive war dreams of the soldiers were attempts at preparing for and mastering retrospectively traumas that, at the time they were experienced, had caught them by surprise, or of developing after the fact the shielding “anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis”: “They thus afford us a view of a function of the mental apparatus which, though it does not contradict the pleasure principle, is nevertheless independent of it and seems to be more primitive than the purpose of gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure” (37).

To extrapolate from this to Freud’s interpretation of Hoffmann’s story: the uncanny as a repetition compulsion that overrides the pleasure principle is better represented by the imaginary Sandman, who inspires revulsion and fear in Nathanael in every form in which he is repeated, than by Olympia, whose mechanical movements, however much they hint at the “death instinct” lurking beneath Eros, are marked by a vacillation between life and death, beauty and its

shadow, that is experienced by Nathanael (and the reader) as both compelling and pleasurable.

Mad Love. Freud's occlusion of the female body, as well as his denial of erotic pleasure, in relation to the "compulsion to repeat" is thrown into sharp relief in a strange anecdote in his essay "On the Uncanny" when he discusses an experience he had of unintentionally and repeatedly returning to the red-light district of a small Italian town that he was visiting, whose streets were unknown to him:

I found myself in a quarter of whose character I could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a time without enquiring my way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another *détour* at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to find myself back at the piazza I had left a short while before.... (237)

While Freud hints at the psychic origin of this "unintended reoccurrence of the same situation," he quickly moves on, ignoring the erotic significance of the "painted women" in the compulsion that repeatedly brought him back into their company. To the extent that the "painted lady" is repressed (both in this anecdote and in Freud's theorization of the uncanny) in order to stress the "death instinct" over the sexual drives, she will, however, return with a vengeance in the works of Surrealism, an artistic and cultural movement that came of age with psychoanalysis and that compulsively explored the link between Eros and Thanatos, often in the form of artificial women and imagery that invoked the disarticulations of hysteria. Indeed, Freud's experience in the Italian town was virtually recreated in 1938 at the height of the movement at the International Exposition of Surrealism held in Paris, which featured a network of dimly lit streets populated by mannequins, each outfitted by a different artist (with objects ranging from a bird cage to a fisherman's net), an uncanny red-light district through which visitors were initially asked to find their way in the dark with a flashlight (Belton 111).

Although Freud attempted to close a Pandora's Box by diverting attention away from the mechanical body, whether automaton or hysteric, he opened another in his "discovery" of the automatic psychic processes behind the compulsion to repeat. Just as the body of the automaton/hysteric was losing her meaning—for she had been emptied of demonic intrigue by Charcot and visual intrigue by the practice of psychoanalysis—she was once again invested with an invisible force (the repressed unconscious), inspiring a generation of artists and writers to make her a site/sight of psychic and erotic exploration. André Breton, the founder of the Surrealist movement, famously called hysteria "the greatest poetic discovery of the nineteenth century" (Breton and Aragon 61), for in its manifestations of psychic automatism he saw not symptoms of pathology but liberation, a means of expressing an inner psychic reality that was superior to

external reality. Breton was first exposed to hysteria and the techniques of dream interpretation and free association during World War I, as a medical student interning in a series of neuropsychiatric clinics (under two former assistants of Charcot, Raoul Leroy and Joseph Babinski) that offered treatment to soldiers who had returned from battle. In the same symptoms of “post-traumatic stress” that had inspired Freud’s theory of the death drive, Breton detected a psychic (sur)reality, and in those same techniques used to address the shock of war on the psyche and shepherd it back to normalcy, he intuited a system for shocking the mind out of its normative conditioning and tapping into its imaginative potential.²⁰ While Breton’s poetic interpretation and creative use of psychoanalytic theory put Surrealism at odds with Freud, as well as the French School of Psychiatry as represented by Pierre Janet, Breton credited Freud with bringing back to light “the most important aspect of intellectual life” (“Exquisite Corpse” 66) and grounded Surrealist practice in the “psychic automatism” of Janet.²¹

The “official” definition of Surrealism offered by Breton in 1924, in the movement’s first manifesto, was as follows:

SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern. (“Manifesto” 26)

The Surrealists experimented with psychic automatism through a variety of collaborative writing and drawing games whose goal was to bypass the mind and tap into the inner psyche, and the results of which were often nonsensical phrases or imagistic disarticulations that reproduced the illogic of dreams and the physical disjuncture of hysteria (viewed as analogues by the Surrealists). A favorite was called *The Exquisite Corpse*, played by a group of people on a piece of paper. The first person would compose part of a sentence or drawing, fold over the paper so that his contribution would be concealed from the next person, who would add onto it, until all were finished and the paper was unfolded. The resulting figures—disjointed hybrids that merged inanimate objects with parts of animals, as well as female and male body parts, conjoined or mutated beyond recognition—were extolled by Breton for their “total negation of the ridiculous activity of imitation of physical characteristics,” as well as for carrying “anthropomorphism to its climax” (“Exquisite Corpse” 95).

Reminiscent of the ASFRian “feminization of objects,” the anthropomorphism enacted by the *Exquisite Corpse* was one of a series of Surrealist interests—including dolls, mannequins, and the conjunction of the human and the mechanical—that dovetail with ASFRian proclivities, to which Breton gave the name “convulsive beauty.” At the end of *Nadja* (the last line of which is, “Beauty will be CONVULSIVE or will not be at all” [160]), Breton links convulsive beauty to the trauma of a railway accident—which (like war trauma) Freud discusses in relation to the compulsion to repeat in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*—resulting in a jolt, shock, or “short circuit” that *derails* the rational mind. In *L’Amour Fou* (Mad Love, 1937), he elaborates on the concept (and the

train analogy), suggesting that the perfect illustration would be “a photograph of a very handsome locomotive after it had been abandoned for many years to the delirium of a virgin forest,” for “there can be beauty—convulsive beauty—only at the price of the affirmation of the reciprocal relationship that joins an object in movement to the same object in repose” (“Mad Love” 162.) Breton’s erotic and liberatory interpretation of the trauma associated with the railroad thus offers an alternative reading of the machine woman of modernism about which Huyssen writes.

The artist who took the disarticulated figure of convulsive beauty even further than the Surrealists, who was perhaps most responsible for the Surrealist fascination with mannequins, and whose work intersects most blatantly with ASFRian proclivities, is the German artist Hans Bellmer (1902-1975), best known for his photographed *poupées* or dolls.²² Bellmer drew an explicit connection between his dolls and the uncanny, stating that a large part of their inspiration was his attendance at Max Reinhardt’s 1932 production of the Offenbach opera “Tales of Hoffmann,” in which the story of Coppelia/Olympia from the “The Sandman” is recreated in the first act. He began work on his first doll shortly thereafter, building its frame from wood brooms and metal rods jointed with nuts and bolts

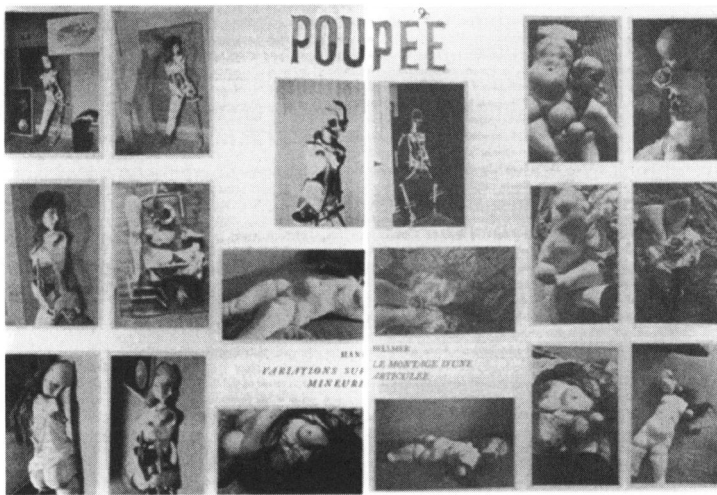


Figure 4: Bellmer’s work in *Minotaure* 6 (Winter 1934-35)

and filled out with flax fiber covered with plaster of paris. Throughout the doll’s construction, he took photographs, ten of which were included in a small book that he published with his own money called *Die Puppe* (The Doll, 1934), preceded by a short introductory text entitled “Memories of a Doll Theme.” In the winter of 1934-35, eighteen photographs appeared in a two-page spread in the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* under the title “Variations sur le montage d’un mineure articulée,” launching his relationship with the surrealist movement (see figure 4). In the images from the book and journal, the doll appears like a mannequin-wannabe caught in an ongoing state of arrested development between

wholeness and dissolution, adulthood and adolescence, her sad, partial figure splayed on a bed or leaning against a wall and often posed against a backdrop of chiffon or delicate lace. Bellmer had wanted to allude to the internal or psychic nature of the doll's form through a kind of peep show embedded in her stomach. Activated by a button on the left nipple, it was to display in succession six miniature panoramas attached to a wooden disc, each of which made visible "suppressed girlish thoughts" (qtd. in Lichtenstein 174).

Although the peep-show was never implemented, Bellmer's desire to produce a figure capable of articulating an inner psychic reality was more fully realized through a second doll, completed in 1935. Inspiration came in the form of a pair of sixteenth-century wooden figures, each about eight inches tall, that he and Lotte Pritzel discovered in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum in Berlin.²³ Used by artists as aids to study human proportions and movement (similar to the wooden figures that artists still use today), they could be manipulated to a high degree, since every body part, from limbs to neck and torso, was assembled around carefully crafted ball joints. Using them as a guide, Bellmer produced wooden ball joints around which he arranged a new set of interchangeable and multiplied limbs and breasts. Unlike the first doll, the second was less a construction than what Rosalind Krauss has called "construction *as* dismemberment" (86; emphasis in original), an endlessly transformable configuration of discombobulated body parts, which Bellmer photographed in more naturalistic settings. Some of the more provocative images involve two sets of legs attached to the same torso, from which the upper body and head are missing. The uncanny doubling of limbs that are often contorted or flailing conveys both the disarticulation and the convulsive visibility of hysteria, by which Bellmer, like many Surrealists, was fascinated.

Bellmer elaborates on the connection between these dolls and hysteria in his *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image* (1957), which serves as a theoretical and poetic counterpart to his work. The book translates the Freudian interpretation of hysteria as the physical migration of displaced psychic trauma into a theory of desire, particularly as expressed and transformed through the kinds of physical distortions made possible by the image. In a lengthy passage worth quoting for the way in which it eroticizes the shock associated with the uncanny, Bellmer suggests that

desire takes its point of departure, when concerning the intensity of its images, not from a perceptive whole but from details. If a naked hand unexpectedly emerges from a pair of pants in place of a foot, it is provocative of quite another degree of reality and—like an embarrassing stain on the edge of one's underwear—infinately more powerful than an entirely visible woman; it hardly matters, for the moment, whether this efficacy can be attributed to the surprise of discovering a deceptive aspect of desire, anticipated souvenirs, or even some reference to dark knowledge. The main thing to retain from the monstrous dictionary of analogies/antagonisms, which constitute the dictionary of the image, is that any given detail, such as a leg, is perceptible, accessible to memory, and available (in short is REAL), only if desire does not fatally take it for a leg. *The object identical to itself remains devoid of reality.* (31; emphasis added)

The conception expressed by Bellmer of a “REAL” that is invoked by a surprising and embarrassing “stain” in the field of vision would be rearticulated as the Gaze by Jacques Lacan in his 1964 Seminar, in which he applies to psychoanalysis the insights of, among other surrealists, Breton in *Mad Love*. Lacan makes a critical distinction between the eye of conscious perception and the Gaze that lies outside of consciousness, the former associated with what he calls the *automaton* (“the insistence of signs, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle”) and the latter the *tuché* (the “encounter with the real,” repeated “as if by chance,” which lies beyond the *automaton* [Four 53-54]). While these terms, which Lacan deploys in order to articulate “the function of the real in repetition” (54), are elaborations of that which lies within and beyond the pleasure principle, unlike Freud, who steers us away from representational practices, Lacan is interested in tracing the *tuché* or Gaze within the visual field, which he, like Bellmer, aligns with “the stain”: “The function of the stain and of the gaze is both that which governs the gaze most secretly and that which always escapes from the grasp of that form of vision that is satisfied with itself in imagining itself as consciousness” (Four 74). The “stain” is thus that which visually undermines the *automaton* or Ideal-I constituted through what Lacan calls the “mirror stage,” a psychic turning point when the infant, who has yet to gain full mastery of its body, identifies its “self” within a mirror for the first time. The exteriorized double, through which the infant appears whole, integrated, and individual, will become the misplaced site of “self”-identification, whose Gestalt opposes the heterogeneous flux of the body, launching

the *I*'s mental permanence, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination. This gestalt is also replete with the correspondences that unite the *I* with the statue onto which man projects himself, the phantoms that dominate him, and the automaton with which the world of his own making tends to achieve fruition in an ambiguous relation. (“Mirror” 5)

Bellmer's dolls reverse the process by which the *automaton* of the “mirror stage” is constructed by disturbing the image with surprising “details,” as well as through an uncanny doubling that invokes the “fragmented body”—retained after the “mirror phase,” according to Lacan, in dreams and “the lines of ‘fragilization’ that define the hysteric's phantasmatic anatomy, which is manifested in schizoid and spasmodic symptoms” (6-7). This gesture of derealization is exemplified by one of Bellmer's photographs (see figure 5) in which the ball-jointed doll, appearing as two sets of legs inversed and attached to the same torso, each outfitted like a young girl in Mary Janes and bobby socks, lies sprawled in front of a mirror, one set of legs braced against the wall and mirror, the other seemingly in the midst of kicking as if in a temper tantrum or hysterical fit. Visible in the mirror against which the doll is leaning is an amorphous jumble of parts, which has no correspondence to the body it is reflecting. Played out within the conflicted doubling of the doll and its disjointed reflection is an attempt at acknowledging the split upon which the subject is constituted. Like the robotic interior that ruptures the human exterior within ASFRian fantasy, the mirrored or doubled image within Bellmerian anatomy does not serve as a reconstruction so much as an unmasking, a sign (experienced “as if by chance”) of the Real that lies beyond

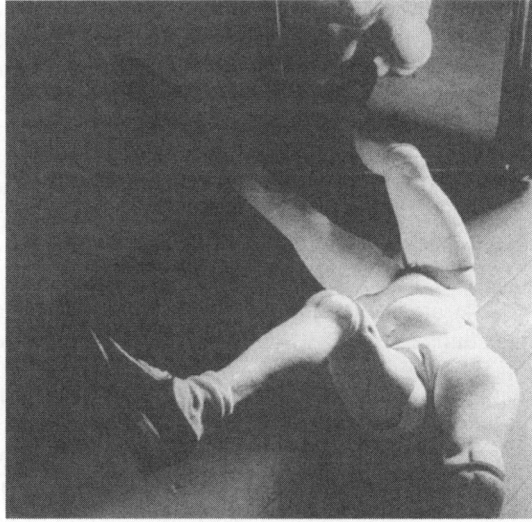


Figure 5: "The Mirror Stage"

the *automaton*. It is for this reason that, as Rosalind Krauss suggests, Bellmer's dolls complicate the Freudian model of fetishism, in which an artificial monument is erected in place of a natural absence:

Surrealist photography does not admit of the natural, as opposed to the cultural or made. And so all of what it looks at is seen as if already, and always, constructed, through a strange transposition of this thing into a different register. We see the object by means of an act of displacement, defined through a gesture of substitution. The object, "straight" or manipulated, is always manipulated, and thus always appears as a fetish. (69)

Hal Foster, on the other hand, suggests that Bellmer's dolls appeal to something more than fetishism and beyond the pleasure principle. As he notes, unlike the Freudian fetish object, they do not disguise sexual difference but explore it obsessively, and they do not hide the effects of their own production, as in the Marxist account of fetishism, but flaunt it repetitively. "Moreover, the notion of a 'dictionary of analogues-antagonisms' does not imply a fixing of desire (as in the Freudian account of fetishism); rather its shifting drives the many recombinations of the dolls" (103).

Bellmer's attempt to map the convolutions of the psyche and the rhizomatic workings of desire, free from outside control, complicates any understanding of the dolls as autonomous. Nevertheless, like Surrealism itself, Bellmer has been subject to a great deal of criticism for his blatant and seemingly sadistic manipulation of the female figure.²⁴ To such critiques, Foster responds that a distinction should be made between sadism and the representation of sadism: Bellmer's dolls "go beyond (or is it inside?) sadistic mastery to the point where the masculine subject confronts his greatest fear: his own fragmentation, disintegration, and dissolution. And yet this is also his greatest wish" (109). Moreover, both Foster and Therese Lichenstein insist that Bellmer's dolls should

be read through the sociopolitical context in which they were created. Bellmer's first doll was constructed in 1933, the year that the Nazis came to power in Germany. At the time, Bellmer owned an advertising and design agency. He closed down shop, however, fearful of inadvertently creating work that would in some way benefit the government, and devoted himself entirely to art that, according to Lichtenstein, was produced, in large part, as a protest against the cult of the perfect body within fascism, as well as the more general appearance of a mechanized, spectacularized, and "feminized" mass culture (13). Against these idealized and stereotyped bodies, Bellmer pits a convulsively mutating figure that breaches the boundaries of physical beauty and unity policed by the Nazis, while also embodying the psychological tensions and displacements experienced under the social constraints of fascism. Bellmer suggests in his *Little Anatomy* that, as in hysteria, the greater the repression, the more convoluted the expression, and thus the dolls not only represent the promiscuity or "flow" of desire, but also the psychic distortions of a desire caught between inner longing and external forces. As he says elsewhere, "The origin of that part of my work that scandalizes is the fact that for me the world is a scandal" (qtd. in Jelenski n.p.). There is, then, both self-reflexivity and social critique at work in Bellmer's dolls; indeed, he seems to pose an unflinching self-reflexivity *as* a form of social critique.

In short, Bellmer's dolls were intended, as I have argued about ASFRian fantasy, as a desublimatory assault on the normative, stable, and cohesive subject, and in particular on the psychic armoring of the fascist body by which fragmentary, fluid, and chaotic drives were repressed, abjected, and mapped onto the Other, represented in the case of the Nazis by women, Jews, homosexuals, and Communists.²⁵ They speak not to the aesthetic gaze, in which the sexual drives are sublimated through the object of beauty, but to the curious gaze of Pandora, who opens the box and experiences the uncanny vertigo of her own true nature (as does Nathanael when the automaton is revealed as not just a mechanical object, but an extension of the mechanical compulsions of his own psyche).

Eye Robot. Although Bellmer's dolls were a product of their time, created in dialogue with the cult of the perfect body within fascism and the hysterical body within Surrealism, they anticipate the dislocation of bodies and identities, as well as the interpretive dilemmas they inspire, within current technocultural contexts. Indeed, the extent to which cyberbodies are, like those of hysteria, displaced (by prosthetic implants and extensions), dispersed (by communications technologies), and subject to forces outside the will of their owners, is one of the central concerns of cyberpunk. Moreover, like Bellmer's disarticulated dolls, when such technologically decentered figures cross into gendered and eroticized zones, they often inspire conflicting claims of containment and liberation, as well as conflicting reactions between alienation and desire. The connection between the two is made explicit in Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, which uses Bellmer's dolls as a central visual thematic to underscore the uncanniness of embodiment and desire when mediated through technology.

The sequel to *Ghost in the Shell* (*Kôkaku kidôtai*, 1995) and similarly adapted from the manga by Masamune Shirow, *Ghost in the Shell 2* explores at greater length not only the kinds of questions posed by the first film about mind, matter, and spirit in the information age, but also the aesthetic and ethical concerns raised by the encounter with artificial bodies. The second film, in fact, seems to address directly the critical reception of the first film, particularly concerning the central protagonist, Major Motoko Kusanagi, a female cyborg. The first film takes place in the year 2029; Kusanagi is a special agent whose bodily parts are entirely artificial—except for her original brain tissue, which is encased within a titanium skull—and owned by her employer, the government security force Section Nine. Both cybernetically enhanced and contained, posthuman and sexualized, Kusanagi has inspired comparisons to Haraway's cyborg in her embodiment of both "the liberating and the dehumanizing power of technology," as well as critiques of her seemingly ambivalent suspension "between a progressive and a reactionary politics of technology or gender" (Bolton 730). Carl Silvio, for example, casts her as a posthuman update of Pandora, suggesting a deceptive split between her appearance and reality; while she poses as a radical cyborg, she ultimately reinforces traditional gender roles, exhibiting a duplicity of which a great deal of cyborg culture is guilty: "There is thus what might be called an element of seduction at work, whereby information technology often presents itself to us as potentially liberating when in fact our actual interactions with it often reinforce conventional social structures of domination" (55).

If Silvio's critique seems to echo those of Bellmer's dolls in its concern for the status of the culturally and physically situated female body in the face of its disarticulated counterparts, other critics have, in a manner similar to Bellmer's defenders, pointed out that such a critique ignores the distinction between representations of embodiment and actual bodies. Christopher Bolton, for example, draws from the long tradition of puppetry in Japan in order to illustrate the ways that artificial bodies (especially when represented within anime) are marked by an added layer of performativity that inflects their meaning, and he suggests that to ignore the performative aspect of these bodies is to miss their critical potential:

Concerned with linking anime to a real-world context in which flesh-and-blood bodies are threatened with genuine objectification and violence, this approach treats fictional cyborgs on more or less the same plane as living human subjects. But treating Kusanagi as a living subject clearly misses the ways in which her body will always fall inside quotation marks; she is a virtual or performed subject that is both unreal and more than real from the start. (737)

Bolton's reminder of the puppet's artifice is a leitmotif in *Ghost in the Shell 2*, a film that explores the confusion between the human and the artificial, as well as the real and the virtual, in relation to a central question posed, significantly, by a character named and fashioned after Donna Haraway: "Why are humans so obsessed with recreating themselves?" In the film, the character Haraway is a coroner, who appears in a lab surrounded by android parts, including bodies hanging from hooks and a vat of artificial eyes. Although one might be tempted to compare her appearance to that of the real Donna Haraway, when the scene

comes to a close, she lifts up a faceplate to reveal, behind her eyes, a technological viewing apparatus implanted in her skull. Echoing the scene in “The Sandman” when Olympia’s eyes are removed, it is one of many reminders in the film that we are in the zone of the visual uncanny, where the boundary between human and machine, as well as between perception and reality, is unstable. Indeed, Oshii has explicitly stated the importance of the concept of the uncanny for understanding his film, which displays, in particular, an “obsession with the uncanniness of *ningyō* (literally, ‘human-shaped figures’) in the form of dolls, puppets, automata, androids, and cyborgs” (Brown 222). Moreover, *Ghost in the Shell 2*, like Hoffmann’s story, interrogates the uncanny in the realm of desire through the figure of the female android.

The film opens three years after the close of the story in the first *Ghost in the Shell*. A prototype of a new gynoid model, the Hadaly 2052 (manufactured by the corporation Locus Solus specifically for sexual purposes), is running amok, and there have been a string of incidents in which Hadaly gynoids kill their owners and, shortly thereafter, self-destruct.²⁶ The film follows the investigation by Section Nine, this time led by the cyborg Batou, the second in command under Kusanagi in the first film, and his “mostly-human” partner, Togusa. It opens with a chase scene in which Batou follows the trail of a Hadaly who has just killed her owner and two police officers. Batou corners the wayward gynoid in an alleyway and, just as he is about to shoot her, she cries “Help Me!” and proceeds to self-destruct, ripping open her own chest to expose her inner mechanism and then ejecting her metallic skull like a jack-in-the box (see figure 6). This scene is more than suggestive of the kind of unmasking central to both ASFRian and Bellmerian



Figure 6: Exploding Gynoid in *Ghost in the Shell 2*

fantasy; as Steven Brown notes, it was inspired by an illustration by Bellmer entitled *Rose ouverte la nuit* (Rose opened at night, 1934), in which a young girl rips open her own skin to reveal her inner organs (see Brown 239). The reference to Bellmer becomes more explicit in the opening credits that follow, in which title cards are interspersed with a series of sequences depicting the manufacture of a Hadaly-type gynoid, whose ball-jointed limbs move into place within a watery environment, accompanied by the sound of clicking gears. As a pair of legs

without a torso floats into view, it seems to undergo binary fission, doubling before our eyes into a nearly exact replica of Hans Bellmer's ball-jointed doll, before separating into two identical gynoids (see figure 7). The reference to Bellmer is reinforced yet again later in the film, when Batou finds a significant clue to the mystery of the malfunctioning gynoids in a representation of the Japanese reissue of Bellmer's book "The Doll" (published in 1995) that he discovers at a crime scene. An inspector has been murdered by yakuza affiliated

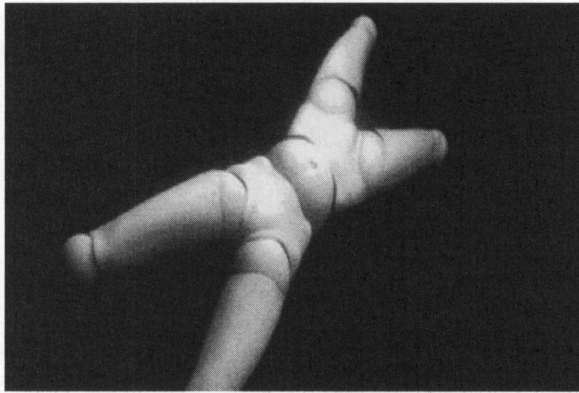


Figure 7: Ball-jointed doll in *GIS2* opening

with Locus Solus. The clue, slipped into the pages of Bellmer's book, is a holographic image of a young girl, whom Batou will eventually discover to be only one of many children abducted by the yakuza for Locus Solus for the purpose of "ghost dubbing"—extracting their ghosts to ensoul the Hadaly gynoids and make them more desirable. The children's bodies are kept suspended within mechanical cocoons. This turn of events not only echoes the narrative of Villiers's *Tomorrow's Eve*, in which the android Hadaly (the citational source for the Hadaly androids in the film) is ensouled by a living woman in a catatonic trance, it offers an inversion of the climactic scene within Hoffmann's tale: instead of the woman being revealed as an android, the android is unmasked to reveal the human beneath the mechanical exterior of the doll.

Although the resolution to the murder mystery is conventional in the sense that the villains are stopped and the young girls are saved, the ethical landscape of the film is less clear. When the little girl from the holographic portrait is freed, she explains to Batou that the inspector was killed for overwriting the ethics code programmed into the gynoids, which prevented them from harming humans or themselves, the rationale being that if they malfunctioned violently, it would help to draw attention to the children's plight. "But what about the victims?" Batou asks, to which she reacts with a tearful outburst, "I didn't want to become a doll!" Kusanagi, whose ghost appears in the film only in this final scene in the form of one of the Bellmerian Hadaly bodies (which she has temporarily inhabited to help Batou), responds to the little girl's lament: "If the dolls could speak, no doubt they'd scream: I didn't want to become human." There is, so the film seems to

suggest, an equal injustice committed in forcing humanity upon the doll (whether visually, narratively, or critically), as there is in making human girls doll-like. Indeed, the film not only “remediates Bellmer’s dolls” (Brown 223), it also rearticulates his aesthetic conviction (quoted above) that “the object identical to itself remains devoid of reality.” This point is emphasized through a variety of strategies, both narrative and formal, for defamiliarizing or rendering uncanny the characters in the drama in ways that remind us repeatedly that they are not who or what they appear to be.

One strategy of defamiliarization, which Oshii borrows from French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard, is citationality. The dialogue throughout the film is interspersed with quotations of other authors—meditations on the relationship between mind and body, as well as between dolls and humans, drawn from such diverse sources as René Descartes, Heinrich von Kleist, Villiers de l’Isle Adam, Julien Offray de La Mettrie, John Milton, and the Old Testament. This technique adds a critical dimension to the film by drawing attention to the history of ideas that informs its inquiry into the human and the artificial. In this way, the characters speak both *for* themselves and *within* a network of cultural and historical relations of which the viewer is made continually aware. Characters are also disrupted from within the diegesis through e-brain hacking. There are numerous instances in the film in which, as Brown puts it, “one character literally or metaphorically ‘pulls the strings’ of another” (224) by hacking into his cyberbrain (implanted cybernetic components that allow the brain to interface directly with information networks) in order to exert control or to implant false realities or memories.²⁷ A third strategy, of particular relevance to the discussion in this essay, is the kind of unmasking so critical to ASFRian desire and fantasy. The Bellmerian disassembly of the gynoid at the beginning of the film, which sets the murder investigation in motion, will return in an uncanny sequence towards the end, when Batou and Togusa enter the mansion of the hacker Kim. In the middle of interrogating a grotesque, puppet-like figure whose e-brain Kim controls (raising the question of whether or not Kim is still alive), Togusa’s e-brain is hacked in such a way that the scene that we have just watched is repeated three times. In the first repetition, the puppet figure that Kim inhabits is now a doppelgänger of Togusa, who quotes freely from Jentsch’s essay on the uncanny relationship between dolls and humans. The (seemingly) real Togusa watches in confusion when, suddenly, Batou turns mechanically towards him and his interior metallic skull ejects out of his head in the exact same manner as that of the wayward gynoid at the beginning of the film. This sequence of events sets off the second repetition: this time, the puppet that Kim inhabits resembles Batou, and the sequence ends with Togusa’s chest exploding to reveal an artificial interior. It is only in the third repetition that Togusa is freed from the virtual feedback loop in which he has been caught.

This sequence, which employs all three techniques mentioned above, renders uncanny not only the characters in the film—both partly human and non-human, the investigators and the investigated—but also the film itself. Its kaleidoscopic repetition of events is confusing (particularly since Togusa is visible, so that the cinematic viewer is outside his point of view while being inside his hallucination)

until we realize, along with Togusa, that an intervening force is at work. It also, as Brown notes, points to larger questions about “what it means to be human in a posthuman world and how we are to relate to all the *ningyō* (dolls, puppets, automata, and androids) that inhabit the world with us” (234). To the extent that answers are offered in the film, they are partially inscribed by its representational approach to the bodies that populate its posthuman landscape.

In conjunction with the above strategies of defamiliarization, Oshii adopts a style of animation that combines 2D and 3D rendering, which reinforces the critical distance between representation and reality, human and humanoid. The more lifelike the character, the more simply rendered and the more likely that it is a hand-drawn cell animation, whereas less animate objects are often computer-rendered in 3D. The contrast is made particularly apparent in a scene of an outdoor puppet festival, based on the annual Dajia Matsu Festival in Taiwan (see Oshii and Yamada 195), in which the larger-than-life, mechanical puppets are virtually realistic, while the living humans who move within and around them are both simply animated and partially obscured. The animation style of the film conforms to the aesthetic tenets of *bukimi no tani* or “The Uncanny Valley,” a theory first articulated in a 1970 paper on robot design by Masahiro Mori, the man considered the father of Japanese industrial robots, but increasingly applied to computer-generated effects within animation and gaming.²⁸ Inspired by Jentsch’s essay on the uncanny, Mori suggests that as anthropomorphic creations become increasingly human, they create greater expectations of human movement, behavior, and appearance, and when those expectations are not met, they produce a creepy or uncanny feeling. His ideas are illustrated in a graph, which charts the degree of realism or humanness achieved (both in terms of

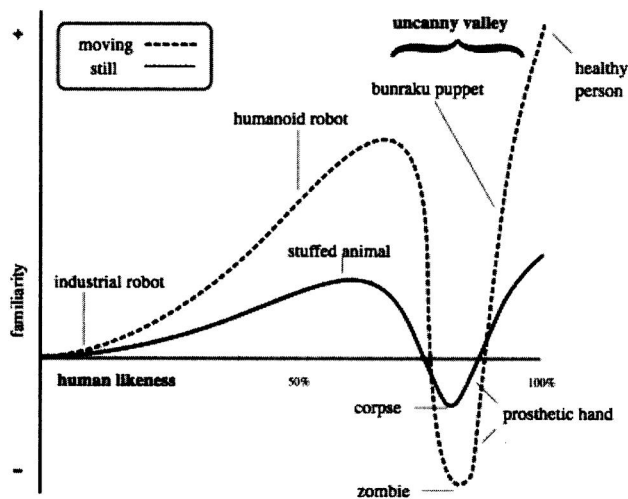


Figure 8: The Uncanny Valley

motion and appearance) and the resultant sensation evoked (see figure 8). At one end of the graph are toys and puppets, while at the other end is perfect verisimilitude, both ends of which, according to Mori, inspire various degrees of pleasure. The graph dips dramatically into the unpleasurable uncanny valley between these two points, where one finds prosthetics and, at the lowest point on the graph, the moving corpse or zombie (see Mori).

Like Jentsch's theory of the uncanny, Mori's "Uncanny Valley" assumes the emotional investment and pleasure of humans in the non-human, offering an aesthetic program for enhancing that pleasure through a dedicated artificiality rather than a simulation of humanness. In so doing, Mori's views echo traditional Japanese aesthetics as influenced by Buddhism (Mori discusses the relationship between Buddhism and robotics in his 1974 book *The Buddha in the Robot*)—which tend to emphasize evocation over description, achieved via the interplay of opposite states, such as light and shadow or sound and silence. Thus they help to forge a bridge between current forms of technological embodiment and Japan's historical legacy of dolls and puppets.²⁹ Indeed, the current prototypes for Japanese humanoid companions, which tend to have a distinctly anti-realistic toy or puppet-like appearance, are often viewed as descendents of *karakuri ningyō*, autonomous mechanical or clockwork dolls that were popularized during the Edo period in Japan, which could perform a variety of tasks and entertainments, and whose goal "was not realism but charm" (Hornyak 25).



Figure 9: A "tea-serving" karakuri automaton, circa 1800 (British Museum)

One of the most popular *karakuri* was a childlike *chahakobi ningyō* or "tea-serving" doll, which is recreated in the uncanny mansion sequence of *Ghost in the Shell 2*. A small puppet-like figure, the tea-serving doll would travel across the room with a teacup on a small serving tray and, after the cup was taken, it would

wait for its return to the tray, after which it would turn and travel in the opposite direction (see figure 9). The doll's ability to "perform the quintessential act of Japanese hospitality—serving green tea" (Hornyak 21) reflects Japanese cultural attitudes towards mechanical humans, including robotic humanoid companions, which are, as Hornyak notes, "social machines" designed primarily for "communication with human beings" (21).³⁰ The subtle and abstract motion achieved by this "robot from the Edo period" has informed everything from bunraku puppet theater to the cyberbodies of anime, all of which use an economy of expression to achieve a maximum emotional impact, reinforcing the idea, expressed by Mori's theory, that the deepest chords of humanity are better struck through an intended artifice rather than through realism.

Ghost in the Shell 2 recreates the legacy of Japanese *ningyō*, including dolls, puppets, and automated mechanisms (*karakuri*), and reminds us of their relevance to the cyberbodies of the current technosphere. To the extent that we either desire or revile such bodies, it is, so the film suggests, because we have compromised their "innocence" with our own projections of humanity. In repeatedly shattering our illusions through its various strategies of unmasking, the film illustrates the affective power of non-human bodies recognized for what they are—both "real and unreal, simultaneously more and less than human" (Bolton 745)—and it demonstrates the possibilities for recuperating an increasingly lost humanity in relation to such bodies. For example, while the character Batou is a visually static, largely artificial being, his relationships with his basset hound, Gabriel, and Motoko Kusanagi form the emotional center of the film.³¹ Like Haraway, whose *Companion Species Manifesto* on dog-human relationships echoes her "Cyborg Manifesto" in its concern for "an ethics and politics committed to the flourishing of significant otherness" (*Companion* 3), the film uses the relational interplay among a cyborg, a dog, and a networked ghost to gesture towards an ethical and emotional reciprocity outside of anthropocentrism. It is in the service of the relationship between Batou and Kusanagi, in particular, that, according to Oshii and Misaki Yamada (who wrote the novelized prequel to the film), the narrative structure of the "murder mystery" is used:

The reason that Batou goes into enemy territory isn't because he really wants to rescue someone, nor is it really because he wants to solve the case. He just wants to meet his angel, Motoko. It doesn't really matter whether their relationship is a conventional romance or not. You see their love might seem cold to humans, but what is between them is no longer human, and now very innocent. (193-94)

Batou is, perhaps, a figure not so different from the socially-alienated ASFRian, who chases the path of the exploding fembot in order to release the human imprisoned beneath her ideal façade. As in A.S.F.R., it is neither the body of the doll nor of the human that is important in Batou's quest, but the interface between the two, where the ghost of his desire enters the picture. Illusions of humanity are shattered, and the film invites us, as spectators, to find something of ourselves within an increasingly posthuman, technofetishistic landscape.

NOTES

1. Gynoids are humanoid robots that are gendered female. Sorayama borrows the term from sf writers Gwyneth Jones and Richard Calder to describe his cyborg (part female/part machine) pin-ups. His "Sexy Robots," while also presented in cheesecake poses, are entirely metallic figures.

2. In 2001, I made a documentary short about the group, which can be viewed at: <<http://www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/2408202>>.

3. While the mantra suggests a male heterosexual bias, a notable portion of the community is homosexual. All of the members with whom I communicated, however, are heterosexual males, so my descriptions should be considered most representative of their proclivities.

4. Consult Wood for a further discussion of this phenomenon (138-39).

5. For a general comparison between Freud's views on fetishism and those of Krafft-Ebing and Bloch, see McCallum (48-54).

6. For an overview of the companies manufacturing life-sized silicone lovedolls in the US, as well as their attempts at animating them robotically, see my article "Future Sex."

7. For a reading of the artificial female in Villiers's novel as *memento mori* rather than as object of necrophilic desire, see my "Anatomical Gaze in *Tomorrow's Eve*."

8. This accounting of Parigi's intentions in the film is based on two interviews that I conducted with him in 2004.

9. Plastination is a process through which the fluids of the body are replaced by a plastic resin that preserves specimens in perpetuity. The technique was invented and patented by the controversial anatomist Dr. Gunther von Hagens, who is best known for the traveling exhibition of dissected cadavers called *Body Worlds* (originally *Körperwelten*). The climax of *Love Object* echoes that of the 1954 classic *House of Wax*, wherein the mad Professor Henry Jarrod (Vincent Price) seeks to transform a captive young woman into a waxen replica of his beloved mannequin Marie Antoinette, which was destroyed in a fire.

10. For those ASFRians who do own Realdolls, the appeal is often a partner with whom they can enact a robotic fantasy, which may involve adding circuits and wires to the doll's silicone exterior.

11. For many ASFRians, the appeal of the artificial woman has, in fact, less to do with a love of the dead than what one ASFRian described to me as "the dream that goes on forever"—i.e., the fantasy of eternal life and beauty.

12. The exchange is archived on the Fembot Central website at: <<http://www.fembotcentral.com/viewtopic.php?t=7764>>.

13. Freud describes a game invented by his infant grandson for managing anxiety around the absence of his mother, which involves throwing away and retrieving a spool attached to a string while repeating "Fort!" and "Da!" (Gone! and There!).

14. It occurred to me more than once that A.S.F.R. might be related to a mild form of Asperger Syndrome. I was not surprised when I read a passage in Katherine Gates's book in which she explains the appeal of the android Data on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-94) for a female ASFRian whom she interviewed. Gates refers to the autistic slaughterhouse designer, Temple Grandin, who also "feels close to him [Data] in his clumsy efforts to perform like a human and in his urge to sort out the mystifyingly inconsistent rules of human social behavior" (Gates 228). Laslocky makes a similar supposition about the doll owners whom she interviewed. Data, claims Gates, has gotten more erotic mail than any other *Star Trek* character, Spock coming in second.

15. For further critiques of Freud along these lines, see Cixous and Kofman.

16. Derived from the word “saltpeter,” Hospice de la Salpêtrière was established by Louis XIV on the site of what had been a gunpowder factory. Less a hospital than a holding pen, it originally housed mostly indigent and insane women whom the Sun King wanted cleared off the streets of Paris; it incorporated a women’s prison for prostitutes at the end of the seventeenth century; and it became the largest asylum in Europe between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The humanitarian and medical reform of the hospital is associated with Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), who became its chief physician in 1795; a statue in his honor still stands outside the hospital today.

17. On Freud and Charcot, see also Didi-Huberman (26-27).

18. Freud would later revise his “seduction theory,” concluding that hysterical symptoms were less dependent on a reality-based sexual trauma than on projected fantasies and repressed desire.

19. “Private theater” was a term used by Anna O. for describing her “daydreams,” which she explored with her analyst Josef Breuer, who collaborated with Freud on *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). Anna O.’s case formed the basis for much of Freud’s discussion in the first of his *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1909).

20. As Hal Foster notes, “whereas surrealism began with hypnotic sessions, psychoanalysis commenced with the abandonment of hypnosis” (2).

21. Following a paper published in the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* in which psychiatrist Paul Abély condemned the attack on psychiatry (and the call for the murder of psychiatrists) in Breton’s *Nadja* (1928), Janet took part in a discussion at the Société Médico-Psychologique in which he decried the work of Surrealists as “above all confessions of men obsessed, and men who doubt.” Both the paper and discussion are reprinted at the beginning of Breton’s “Second Manifesto of Surrealism” as a kind of initiatory prompt for the declarations that follow (119-23; the Janet quotation is from 121). Janet’s *L’Automatisme Psychologique* was published in 1893; on its links with Surrealism, see Foster (1-5, n8, n221). Breton’s *Nadja*, with its diatribes against psychiatry, was reportedly inspired by the author’s personal encounter with a former female patient of Janet’s.

22. Bellmer is generally discussed in relation to the Sadeian materialism of Georges Bataille, who invited him to illustrate his *Story of the Eye* (*Histoire de l’oeil*) in 1945.

23. Lotte Pritzel (1887-1952) was a German artist best known for her wax dolls, which served as inspiration for Rainer Maria Rilke’s essay, “*Puppen*” (Dolls, 1914). Pritzel’s suggestion that Bellmer read Rilke’s essay led him to explore his own obsession with dolls (see O’Reilly, par. 1).

24. See, in particular, Brink and Taylor.

25. For a theoretical analysis of fascist abjection that tallies with this discussion, consult Theweleit.

26. Locus Solus is a reference to the country estate of “a Jules Verne inventor-hero” named Martial Canterel (Ashberry 192) in the 1914 book of the same name by French poet, novelist, and playwright Raymond Roussel (1877-1933). Roussel, who received psychiatric treatment from Pierre Janet, used, in the construction of his novel, a writing method that was based on homonymic puns, which was intended to help him tap into his unconscious. Such techniques made him greatly admired by the Surrealists. The novel, which follows a group tour of Locus Solus, describes, through an increasingly involved series of vignettes, the mechanical wonders and “inventions of ever-increasing complexity and strangeness” showcased by the eccentric inventor for his guests (Ashberry 199).

27. For a more extensive discussion of both citationality and e-brain hacking in the film, see Brown.

28. See, for example, Bode, as well as Butler and Joschko.

29. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki explains traditional Japanese aesthetics in the following way: "There is an old song that says 'the brushwood we gather—stack it together, it makes a hut, pull it apart, a field once more.' Such is our way of thinking—we find beauty not in the thing itself but in the patterns of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates" (29-30).

30. In 2003, when I attended Robodex in Yokohama, at the time the world's only humanoid robot exposition, there was an exhibit devoted to the tea-serving karakuri.

31. Gabriel was fashioned after Oshii's dog of the same name, who was brought into a recording studio so that she could also become the "voice" of her animated counterpart (Oshii and Yamada 191).

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ABSTRACT

This essay interrogates the visual landscape of technofetishism, particularly in relation to the machine woman, using as a springboard a little-known internet community of technosexuals who collectively refer to their fetish for artificial bodies as A.S.F.R. (alt.sex.fetish.robots). Although A.S.F.R. was made possible by the advent of virtual communities, its fetishistic interests have historical antecedents that were documented in the early literature of sexology. Against their classifications of similar fetishistic practices as variations of necrophilia, as well as subsequent Freudian interpretations of fetishism as grounded in castration anxiety, this essay argues that A.S.F.R. is less *about* technology in general, or the artificial woman in particular, than it is a strategy of denaturalization that uses the trope of technological “programming” to underscore subjecthood. Like the trope of “hardwiring”—used within cyberpunk as a signal of the constitution of bodies and identities in relation to networked systems of control and power—“programming” serves as a metaphor for the biological and cultural matrices within which desire is articulated and pursued. “ASFRians” experience pleasure and agency through, in a sense, hacking the system, the visual indicators of which often take the form of a female android who has run amok, an image that is typically read as a threat. By drawing analogies between the uncanny artificial bodies at the heart of ASFRian fantasy and those fetishized by the Surrealists, in particular the disarticulated dolls of German artist Hans Bellmer, as well as those within the current technosphere as exemplified by Mamoru Oshii’s anime *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004), which was deeply influenced by Bellmer’s work, this essay offers an ontology of artificial women that is relevant to the critical understanding of mechanical bodies in popular culture, both past and present.

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.

SF/Porn: The Case for *The Gas*

1. Check. Once, in my younger days, I attended a major academic sf conference where I got to rub shoulders with some of the most powerful and admired critics in the field. In the course of an otherwise convivial conversation, I revealed my affection for Charles Platt's *The Gas* (1970). A moment of shocked silence followed, then the Olympians declaimed together, "That's not science fiction, that's porn!" This seemed a petty response from such an august group; it also made no sense to me. How could *The Gas* not be sf? What secret quality of its depiction of sexual pleasure and "slapstick sadomasochism" run amok neutralized its science-fictionality?¹

Here is the plot; you decide. In the near future, a leak at a top secret weapons lab in the west of England releases a massive chemical cloud, a yellow gas that excites uncontrollable sexual impulses in everyone who breathes it. Our hero, Vincent, who has worked at the plant and appears to be the sole character who understands the gas, sets off for London to gather up his wife and two young teenage children before it can reach the city, to escape with them to Scotland, which is presumably protected by the prevailing winds. On his way in a scavenged Rolls, he gallantly picks up a young female hitchhiker, Cathy. The gas catches up with them, and they have mindless sex that drives them off the road. Vincent walks to a nearby village to call his wife, and discovers that the entire community has been swept up in an orgy on the village green. To get medicines for Cathy, whose head was banged up in the car crash, Vincent must resort to violence. He and Cathy then commandeer the car of a passing priest escaping from what are for him scenes of biblical depravity. They drive off together to find an airplane (Vincent was once an RAF pilot). In the backseat Cathy seductively rapes the priest, who is of course unable to resist, and is "converted" from celibacy by the gas. The trio find a plane in a local airport reduced to chaos, and take off for London. They are, however, forced by their own sexual complications and the lack of ground-control guidance to ditch the plane into the sea; but first they parachute into London. (There is fucking in mid-air, as well.) They reach Vincent's home safely, load up, and drive north. On the way, they encounter numerous afflicted people, including orgiastic nuns and armed, frustrated, high-testosterone London policemen about to start a war with the Cambridgeshire constabulary. We learn that, when frustrated, the gas-induced sexual urge turns into sadistic violence. They lay low for a night in Cambridge with Cathy's psycho psychology-student brother Edmond and a series of escalating comic-horrific sexual ordeals unfolds. After a grotesque orgy participated in by all—in which Edmond's landlady is literally blown up by his homemade orgasm machine—Edmond abducts Julia, Vincent's wife, on a bicycle to the psychology building, brutal experiments are performed by the hyper-repressed male

engineering and medical students, Vincent's children join a gang of other children in a playground turned sexual gymnasium, and Cathy, gone mad, becomes the leader of a mob of Bacchantes that capture and ritually murder random men on the altar-stage of Kings College Chapel. Vincent is captured by these Furies, but before he can be sacrificed, the priest intervenes with a spectacle of exorcistic self-castration. While the mob of raging women is distracted, Vincent escapes by swinging *à la* Tarzan on a bell-rope. The Chapel is destroyed. Vincent and his family reach Scotland, where they happily enjoy what may well be their new reality of incestuous polymorphous perversity. The end.

If this summary raises sexual images in the reader's mind, that would certainly be natural. But in what way is this not a classical British sf plot? A horrific scientific invention that undermines social stability. Check. The hero strives desperately to collect his family and hasten them to safety in a pristine part of the country. Check. They encounter one instance after another of social derangement produced by the gas. Check. If you prefer: novum → social effects → estrangement of socio-psycho-sexual behaviors in bourgeois society. Check, check, check.

2. Disavowal. The specific disavowal of *The Gas* has been part of a general disavowal of a connection between pornography and sf, at least among those scholars and critics whose job it has been to defend the genre's honor. Denigrated by mainstream criticism as vulgar pulp fiction for much of its existence, sf's advocates probably felt the genre needed to be protected from associations with fiction ranked even lower in the hierarchy of genres. Almost by definition pornography has been a stigmatized outsider to bourgeois aesthetic discourse. In the past long century, it has been demonized for undermining Christian discipline, the chivalric codes of Western civilization, the Anglo-Saxon work ethic, and the health of Western manhood, for opening the backdoor to Communism, for celebrating and perpetuating the exploitation of women, and for stimulating narcissism and anomie among an increasingly *otaku* youth. All the while, porn has grown steadily more popular, accessible, and lucrative. Discourse about pornography today has been complicated by this lag between the tradition of discursive stigmatizing and porn's normalization in postmodern culture—a normalization almost unnoticed in academic theory and curricula, but with dramatic implications for global cultural transformation.

The Clute-Nicholls *Encyclopedia* does not have a pornography entry, and even Platt's own current website does not include *The Gas* among the "Selected Novels," despite it being his best-known work of fiction. This is the case despite the fact that some major sf writers, among them Robert Silverberg, Barry Malzberg, Harlan Ellison, and above all Philip José Farmer, supported themselves at points in their careers by writing porn. These facts are usually acknowledged only in passing when acknowledged at all; there has been little work on how their experiences may have influenced their influential iconoclastic sf. In the early 1970s, during the heroic heyday of the underground publishers, Farmer's wild sex-and-violence phantasmagorias, *Image of the Beast* (1968), *Blown* (1969), and *A Feast Unknown* (1970), were reviewed by the sf rags straightforwardly, and their sexual extravagance was accepted without much fuss. (Let me note that the

Encyclopedia entry on Farmer, co-written by David Pringle and John Clute, reports without prejudice on *A Feast Unknown's* sexual craziness [418].) Even then, however, some disavowal was required. Theodore Sturgeon's introduction to *A Feast Unknown* rationalizes it as satire: "ultimate sex combined with ultimate violence is ultimate absurdity," while Farmer himself explicitly denies that *The Gas* is pornography in his introduction to the Savoy edition of the book.²

The historical distancing of sf from porn seems somewhat odd in one respect, given sf's historical affinity for mingling with other marginalized genres, from noir fiction to rock and roll. In the sleazeosphere there are countless examples of porn using sf settings. They are primarily parodies—*Lust in Space* (1985; 1998), *Star Trek: The Next Penetration* (a.k.a. *Sex Trek*) (1990), *Anal Planet* (1994)—but even in parodies pornographic and science-fictional elements commingle in many different ways.³ *Star Trek* has probably been the most frequently pornographized sf work (and K/S or *Star Trek* "slash" fan fiction is the only kind so far granted an academic imprimatur, via the work of Constance Penley). These parodies have cleaved extraordinarily closely to some of the series's original story-plots, preserving characters, uniforms, and technologies. They demonstrate the powerful attraction of the series as a fetish-collection. They also demonstrate that even porn adaptations often respect the aura of science-fictional authenticity, as if expecting that their audiences will appreciate trek-verité as an intensifying value added to the choreography of sex acts. It is hard to know how many such sci-fi porn parodies have been made and written. The only accessible attempts at bibliographies are unreliable, and most of the texts are hard to locate.⁴ Still, we can assume that there is a wealth of such marginal material that the *Encyclopedia* does not recognize, and yet which displays respect for science-fictionality in diverse ways.

3. The Chastity of Astronauts. Until recently, most sf has been relatively chaste in representing sexual acts, let alone making them the focus of the narrative. Before the 1960s, with few exceptions sf was treated by most of its insiders as the very opposite of porn. For the Gernsback-Campbell axis, juvenile male adventure with a wide-eyed, true-blooded drive for exploration and self-control precluded sex as anything but a distraction. Not only the story, but also the narrative was to be kept pure. Delany speculates that this provided the largely male adolescent audience a certain relief:

The pulp hero, though he may be a renegade, is a guy who doesn't feel. Anything. Ever. And for the adolescent male — pummeled by emotions left and right, whether arising from sexuality or resulting from his necessary encounters with authority — this hero is a blessing, a relief and a release. The world he lives in, where feelings are totally under control, looks to the adolescent boy like heaven! This hero's lack of feeling — like *Star Trek's* Spock — is what allows him to be a genius, or allows him to shoot the bad guys and/or aliens, without a quiver to his lip. (qtd. Westerfeld)

The Gothic tradition was more complex, but Victorian codes ruled here also. If the other was to be understood in rational terms, and indeed to preserve the dignity of the rational imagination, the narrative could not let the reader stray into

more visceral pleasures. In the British philosophical tradition of sf, this intellectual purity was even more pronounced. I do not mean to imply that sf writers were especially timid in their understanding of sexuality, only that even in their more extravagant detournements of mainstream ideas they addressed petit-bourgeois audiences rather than the underground. Science fiction was rarely an art of subterranean rebels.

This particular form of self-repressive sf sublimation nonetheless clearly evokes sexual fantasizing in diverse ways. As Rob Latham notes in his study of sexuality in the New Wave, “sf, willy-nilly, is always treating sexual topics, perhaps most powerfully when it seems to be primly avoiding them” (53). It works in two ways: a) sublimation—with its complex association of the sublime with Freud’s psychosexual displacement-through-refinement (and we will not forget the chemical phase transition from solid to gas); and b) seductive insinuation. We will have more to say about sublimation. As for insinuation, it is hard to imagine any sf scenario that cannot tickle the sexual imagination. Contacts with aliens, interpersonal connections in the confined spaces of spaceships and space colonies, relationships under total surveillance, orgasmatrons, Gorian master-slave worlds, Amazon planets, technoscientific shape-shifting, scientific ecstasy, the sado-masochistic dynamics of mad science: all call up the erotic Unsaid—the power source that leads fans to write their own pornographic genre-stories from K/S to manga, the myriad *Flash Gordon* to *Star Trek* porn parodies, or simply to imagine what might have happened had the Time Traveler had less pure intentions regarding Weena, had Genly Ai been more curious about Lord Estraven, or had Bowman and Poole experimented more with their copious free time. Other traditions, such as the *bandes dessinées* of French sf, have expected sf to be more explicitly erotic, but it is only in Japanese sf *hentai* that pornographic sf has become an established subgenre.

4. Porn has a purpose? How can we speak critically about porn as a kind of fiction, let alone science fiction? We face three major discursive obstacles: a) a simplistic and repressive conceptual framework that limits what pornographic messages are imagined to be; b) the dominance of photographic visuality and visual media in contemporary critical theorizing about pornography, which largely excludes prose porn from its discourse; and c) the ostensible “graphic simplicity” of pornography, the centrality of explicitly described sexual acts, which supposedly resists reflective language. In view of all this, porn seems to be resistance to reflection embodied in style, focusing on the physical body, inspiring intense feelings, and making fun of sublimation. Porn is distinguished from the “Erotic,” a style that employs complex symbolic insinuations, like Barthes’s striptease. Porn is the hard core uncovered, *dis-covered* in plain sight —“overlit,” Ballard would say—which the “erotic” only suggests. The thing itself. Yeah, right.

It is extremely difficult to write about porn in anything but stigmatizing terms, or alternatively, in the equally simplistic terms defending cultural rebels against the disciplinary regime. This conflict became especially interesting when sex-positive feminist critics argued against the Dworkin-MacKinnon definition of

pornography as actual violence against women, a radical feminist position that coincided with deep-dyed conservative interests. The new terms of discourse introduced the notion that all people had rights to imaginative pleasure, and disputed the putative correspondence of pornography's represented sex with real-world abuse. Further, as in Barbara Creed's formulation, "[p]ornography is one of those rare cultural spaces where it is acceptable for women to voice their own desires" (58). This new line of theory in its turn has coincided with the interests of the growing porn industry.

When porn has been defended by elite male critics, they have used an argument seemingly irrefutable in its simplicity: porn is a genre defined by a single-minded purpose, to arouse the (usually, but not always, male) audience and inspire masturbation:

hard-core pornography ... is orgasmic in intent and untouched by the ulterior motives of traditional art. It has simple and localized purpose, to induce an erection. And the more skillfully the better. Contrary to popular myth, it takes discipline and devotion to be a first-rate pornographer, and only the subtlest command of rhythm and repetition will produce ideal results. These usually take the form of solo masturbation—usually, but not invariably, since vocal excerpts from bawdy books can often by [sic] employed to vary or intensify the customary fun of sexual coupling. In any case, the aim of pornography is physical enjoyment. (Tynan 182)

A pornographic work represents social acts of sex, frequently of a perverse or wholly fantastic nature, often without consulting the limits of physical possibility. Such works encourage solitary fantasy, which is then usually discharged in quite harmless masturbation. A pornographic book, then, is an instrument for procuring a sexual catharsis, but it rarely promotes the desire to achieve this through a social mode, an act of erotic congress: the book is, in a sense, a substitute for a sexual partner. (Anthony Burgess, qtd. Feinberg 130)

If these claims were correct, then there would be no point in writing in literary-critical terms about a work of porn, other than maybe to narrate a narcissistic recap of a masturbation fantasy (porn begets porn), since it has only private significance and no "social" meaning. Such claims also assume that erotic stimulation is not an emotion—more precisely, that it is distinct from whatever emotion might be attached to it. In effect, the reasoning denies that there can be a "hard-core" sexual imagination with complex emotional dimensions; it dismisses the possibility that such sex fantasies can be romantic (so much for sexual love) or political. The case for pornography becomes entirely a matter of the right to privacy (in this case, of private enjoyment), an argument that by its very nature denies the Enlightenment's radical association of pornography and political liberation.

Such narrow arguments have been superseded by sex-positive approaches that treat the sexual imagination as a general human quality that should flourish: to restrict any group—the young, the old, the infirm, the altruistic, anyone—from developing that imagination is to deny their humanity. From this perspective, masturbation fantasies are themselves social, because the very act of masturbation is shared by billions. Once one accepts that pornography and the sexual

imagination are indeed social and involved with liberation projects at least as much as with the exploitation of sex-workers, the critical and aesthetic dimensions of porn grow as well. A pornographic work of art then requires no less attention than any multiply coded, intentionally designed text, i.e., art.

And yet even Delany, who has come closest to integrating pornography in his sf, invokes the simple purpose argument by alluding to Auden's conclusion that "pornography is that which gives me an erection."⁵ Ray Davis critiques this ostensibly naive (for Delany) reference:

Auden's "pornography is that which gives me an erection" ... is about as useful as defining science fiction by sense of wonder. For all practical purposes, porn is defined by its focus on sex. Tumescence and lubrication may help the writer maintain that focus, but what the reader does with that focus is up to the reader. (163)

In fact, Delany's allusion is less naive than strategic; it provides him with a way to demonstrate that his ostensibly pornographic works—*Hogg* [1993] and *The Mad Man* [1994]—are anti- or perhaps "meta"-pornographic because they exceed the functionality of porn.⁶

Following Davis, it makes no more sense to speak of even hard-core porn as merely functional, as if it had a single focus, a single object, and a transparent language, than it does to instill the "sense of wonder" as the simple, single, and transparent function of sf, as if both genres were powerful drugs intended to create specific kinds of buzz. Since they are both forms of fictive discourse, it is absurd to think that their effects can be that simple. Roman Jakobson's well-known distinction between functional and aesthetic language is what we need here. Jakobson proposed a model for distinguishing the discourse of functional communication from language that is aesthetically charged. In the former, words evaporate as soon as a message is understood; in the latter, the words remain in play in memory and consciousness, even after the practical message has ceased to be pertinent (69-71). Applied to porn, one might say (for the sake of argument) that the supposed function, the delivered message, is stimulation and orgasm. But the condition of fictionality, the fact that the "purpose" is realized in a story with images, metaphors, idioms, and other figures that are themselves different from the purpose, and may actually not only exceed them but last after the function has been fulfilled, marks pornographic language as ultimately not merely functional but aesthetic. If the figures remain in memory, even if only to recall the memory of arousal, they exist beyond their supposed purpose.

To take an obvious instance, Peter Michelson in the long outdated *The Aesthetics of Pornography* (1971) states that porn cannot be comic because humor creates a reflective zone that inhibits the fulfillment of porn's purely physical purpose (Farmer inexplicably takes the same tack in his introduction to *The Gas*):

Comedy is especially incapable of being pornography (though it may work its own purposes on erotic materials), because a laugh is a "discharge within the work," not as cause of further intentions to be discharged in "real life acts." The funny bone is not a sex organ. (136)

Nothing could be further from the truth. Pornography has traditionally welcomed humor, from gutter joking to courtly wit, from comic satire to outright sexual comedy, from the classical period to the present. Having fun sex with the wrong people, mistaken identities, physical exaggerations, initiations into pleasure rather than moral constraint, the whole treasury of comic motifs and devices leads quite naturally to sexual pleasure and to festive celebrations (i.e., comic orgies) of wish fulfillment. The possibilities for comedy are enhanced by the way the porn text implicates the reader. If the reader cannot resist the seduction to imaginary pleasure, he or she becomes a virtual subject of satire and comedy that is about the inability to resist seduction. Furthermore, the putative simplicity of sex acts as objects of representation—consisting of just a few organs in billions of similar iterations—places style in the forefront. The gap between physical stimulation and linguistic play tends to be ironic and comic at the very least, but could just as easily also be romantic in tales of sexual love, and in a sexually mature culture might involve tragedy and philosophy.

5. Poor Prose Porn. For the past forty years, most of the sophisticated theoretical reflections about porn have centered on film rather than prose. This has been catalyzed especially by Linda Williams's conception of cinematic porn as "the frenzy of the visible." Williams modifies Laura Mulvey's famous notion that cinema embodies the male gaze, creating voyeuristic-sadistic pleasure in its spectators. In pornographic film, sexual pleasure is no longer displaced and concealed by sublimated repressive codes of masculine purpose; porn film's *raison d'être*, according to Williams, is to make phallogentric sexuality absolutely *visible*—porn film revels in revealing displays of physical build-up and discharge, culminating in the "money shot" that makes ejaculation (the "proof" and "purpose" of male sexuality) fully visible, no longer hidden in a woman's body or serving an ulterior, reproductive purpose. While this is a compelling interpretation of the classical stag/porn tradition of film, it has only limited applicability to written porn. Obviously, the "visibility" of literary sexuality, its "graphic" status, is entirely virtual and metaphorical. The mediation of writing in creating images in the reader's mind depends on discursive traditions and codes of language specifically in the absence of iconic images. The fact that erotic comics and some books include visual images also does not change this situation, since the two modes of representation work in different ways to create diverse effects. Just think about attaching thought balloons to "explicit" photographs, or perhaps subtitles to a fuck film. The two modes stimulate different kinds of imagination.

The difference between the two media reaches nearly ontological dimensions—between the spoken discourse of stimulation and the mimetic visual depiction, between a world constructed out of memory and fantasy and an imaginary voyeuristic "witnessing." This is not a difference limited to pornography: it is central to the difference between literary and cinematic sf, or indeed between writing and film in general. The writing of "graphic" sex does not involve the extremely important questions that photographic pornography does:

about the conditions of production of cinematic porn, the true conditions of the actors who act in such films, the character of the production and distribution system, the connections between the (visual) porn industry and the political economy, etc. A full-fledged theorization of these differences requires much study, and would necessarily have to include comics and animated cartoons, two media that operate within still different aesthetic ontologies (the complexities of which were recently illustrated by the outcome of the Handley case in Iowa in 2008 affirming that a manga with cartoon illustrations of pederasty falls under the category of “child pornography” even if there are no actual children exploited to make them.)⁷ Given also that cinema is an inherently much more aggressive medium than writing, since the spectator is expected to keep up with the narrative pace and to absorb the sensory stimuli of sound and light as they are administered simply to stay with the action, we should expect that written pornography also solicits the sexual imagination in an entirely different mode, in which the reader has considerably greater freedom to entwine his or her own associations, memories, and reflections with the words on the page. And these words, because they are part of a story, are making their own associations with other kinds of words.

Of course, “purpose” cannot be ignored in a social medium. Davis’s comparison with sf is suggestive. Can there be sf without a sense of wonder? I have argued elsewhere that sf audiences demand experiences of sublime and grotesque spectacles caused by scientific invention or discovery, senses of wonder that give a particular kind of complex pleasure.⁸ If a text does not deliver these feelings, then an audience might feel as frustrated and deceived as if they had paid money to see a horror film that was not scary, a romance that was cold and unfeeling, or a porn film that did not arouse them. But we consider sf’s sense of wonder to be connected to rational-logical problems, to the experience of living in a technologically determined environment, to future-oriented anxieties and hopes. It would be surprising if pornography’s “purpose” were not similarly connected to a complex of perceptual and sensory experiences of people living in their social-material worlds.

6. The Grand *Petit Apocalypse*. *The Gas* is a cheerful parody of one of the main plots of British sf: the Wellsian *petite apocalypse*, the model for which is *The War of the Worlds* (1898).⁹ A bourgeois male hero with some handiness but no great expertise, such as the journalist in *The War*, is separated from his family and surroundings by a monstrous intrusion into the familiar and predictable daily life of the settled nation. In *The War* it is an alien invasion, but it might be a terrestrial air war, a new technology, or a technologically awakened monster. This novum is in some ways an extrapolation of certain tendencies in contemporary life, and speculation often links the alien back to the familiar—as the Martians are images of where human beings’ reliance on technology will lead their evolution. The protagonist, either seeking to be reunited with his family or, having collected them, escaping with them, encounters representatives of various bourgeois institutions emblematic of social order in crisis. In *The War*, the main encounters are with the clergyman (religion) and the artilleryman (military rationality/the

state). The primary novum causes secondary novums—the tripods, the red weed—each of which presents a distinct ordeal. In the later versions (including those that became known as “cosy catastrophes”), the fleeing new little nucleus must deal with massive social changes following the catastrophe, striving (not always successfully) to maintain the basic decency of the bourgeois order in the midst of collapsing morals and local power struggles.

In *The Gas*, the journalist’s role is taken by Vincent, whose position at the weapons plant is never made clear, but whose powers never surpass those of a middle-class professional with air-force training. Vincent is one of those dignified, competent Wellsian heroes who is forced by events to resort to force, deceit, theft, and even rape (though whether rape even has a meaning in *The Gas* is not clear), to keep his chivalrous civilized purposes alive: to save a young woman from harm (ha!), and to rescue his family. As for the catastrophe itself, instead of a natural disaster, it is, like the Martian invasion, unambiguously social, and the putative natural devolution is entirely forced on people by technoscience. Vincent fights valiantly against the chaos of sexual desire by taking massive amounts of birth-control pills, and he resists using violence as long as he can; when he is forced to, he feels polite remorse. But he has little choice in the matter. After his first sex with Cathy (which is entirely “consensual,” since both are overcome by the gas), he tries to recover his chivalry:

“I hope I didn’t hurt you too much,” he said quietly.
She turned quickly, catching him by surprise, looking him directly in the eyes. “Of course you hurt me.” (21)

Like Wells’s journalist, Vincent and his little band encounter a priest (and nuns to boot) and policemen, all deranged in their struggle with the alien force that is their own impulses released and augmented. As the complications progress, the action moves toward the core problem: the pathologically-repressed drive for power of scientists responsible for conceiving of the sex-weapon in the first place. There are plenty of horrible-funny scenes of sex and violence before Vincent and his band arrive in Cambridge, but it is in that university city (against which the Cambridge-educated Platt seems to have a solid grudge) that the really weird stuff happens. Cathy’s brother, Edmond, a psychology grad student, has constructed a loony fucking machine to which he straps his female victims, and through Rube Goldberg-like mediations he delays his own orgasm while his victim is mechanically raped. Coolly, Edmond explains that his experiment in (his own) delayed gratification is a “pertinent line of enquiry, in view of the situation, don’t you think? We could all control ourselves a little more” (98).

That “self-control” at the expense of experimental victims takes center stage as Vincent searches for the abducted Julia, whom Edmond has whisked away on his bicycle to the Psych lab. Edmond’s attraction to her is suitably calculating: Julia is “an average woman in every way” (146). In the course of his search (aided by a Cambridge rowing team providing its own mathematical permutations), Vincent witnesses brutal tortures of women in the engineering lab:

Vincent felt like an inspector at a Nazi camp. Except that in the engineering lab, the experiments were not being conducted for mere gratification. It had all been

sublimated. The experiments were in the cause of *pure science*. (132; emphasis in original)

The carnival sadism gets worse as he moves on to the Med Building.

"Why," muttered Vincent, as they left the building, having found no trace of Julia.

"Why?"...

"It's just coming out in the open, that's all," said one of the oarsmen.

"Yeah," said another. "The kids've always felt that way about women, underneath." (133)

Vincent himself is soon captured and subjected to murderous, sadistic mind-control experiments by Edmond. But he is finally released with Julia, when Edmond tires of their averageness. For Edmond has higher ambitions:

"Soon I will control Cambridge from this laboratory building. Those amateur sadists.... I will clean out those other laboratories. The whole town will become an experiment. A miniature society, existing entirely in response to the sex gas, and to me." (147)

Here, in its petty way, is the source of the sex gas: scientists' sexual repression leads to its perverse sublimation—from contained body to a gas that releases the body. It may be no more than a joke on Cambridge geeks, but in Platt's world the Cambridge geeks control technoscience. Like one of Sade's protagonists in *120 Days of Sodom* (1785), *The Gas's* scientist is "lawless and without religion, whom crime amused, and whose only interest lay in his passions ... and had nothing to obey but the imperious decrees of his perfidious lusts" (240)—though in this petit-bourgeois version, he is entirely unaware of it, and hence uses scientific weaponry to extend his displaced desires. Unlike Sade's heroes of sex-crime, Edmond and his ilk use technoscience instead of shackles and whips.

Cathy disappears during the search for Julia, having escaped from Edmond's apartment with Vincent's entire supply of apotropaic birth-control pills. When she reappears, her role and power have grown to enormous proportions (brilliantly captured by the now legendary cover art of the Savoy edition). Cathy is clearly a parody of 1960s feminist rage, ironically resisting not only Edmond's control, but also the author's. *The Gas* is obviously not only critical of its pornography, it also revels in it. Its satire does not work if the reader is not drawn into the stimulation. And in this way Edmond is not only a parody of other Cambridge geeks, but a self-satire, since the author has done the same thing to his readers that Edmond wishes to do with his fictive Cambridge. Cathy is not, however, an innocent victim of Vincent's (and Platt's) sexual aggression, as she believes herself to be; she is not entirely passive, nor is Vincent entirely aggressive. There is the Gas. She is at first a comic archetype, a grotesque slapstick punching bag, always at the receiving end of accidental hard knocks, becoming increasingly deranged by their effects. Then as the leader of the Gas-world Bacchae, she becomes a wholly different archetype, the avenging Fury of sexually victimized young womanhood (no matter that the Gas has turned everyone—including dogs—into sexual aggressors). As if the Gas had split the genders into their archetypes and then filled them with primal powers, Cathy emerges as Edmond's counterpart. Both set out to slaughter their gender-adversaries, Edmond with cold

scientific calculation, Cathy with raging mutilation and cannibalism. Let us note the disparity of their fates: Cathy is most likely crushed by the collapsing Cathedral, while Edmond still seems to have free rein over the town.

In the end, Vincent, Julia, and their kids do manage to escape to Scotland, where they can finally rest, wait for the gas to dissipate, and enjoy a little family orgy in contentment and comfort. The ending brings to mind another touchstone of utopian incest of the period, R. Crumb's panel, "The Family that Lays Together Stays Together." (To avoid the risk of being arrested for contributing to the delinquency of cartoon characters, we will not show the panel; you can search for it on Google.) And indeed it is a pity that Crumb has never drawn *The Gas*.

7. The Airborne Toxic Fuck Gas Accident. Platt's choice of a weaponized sex gas is not absurd in itself. Hamas has accused Israel of smuggling chewing gum laced with aphrodisiacs into Gaza as a weapon for undermining the morals of young people.¹⁰ Closer to home, the Pentagon has revealed that it was recently researching the possibility of a "gay sex bomb"—a weapon that would cause enemy soldiers to become irresistibly attracted to their comrades of the same sex, thus apparently catastrophically undermining morale.¹¹ Stanislaw Lem even entertains the idea of a "reverse sex bomb" as an ideal sf plot (162-64). He imagines that "the use of a certain chemical that separates the sensations of pleasure from sex spreads throughout the Earth" (162). Since sex would no longer give anyone pleasure, humanity faces extinction. Mass-distributed pornography would not help; it would be as effective as trying to inspire a ditch-digger with photographs of shovels. Medals and rewards might work, but commissions would have to be set up to guarantee that the couplings are real.

Lem's story-idea is thoroughly anti-pornographic—the last thing such a story would provide is sexual stimulation. Yet the comic distance Lem imagines brings into relief the inverse advantages of intensifying the sexual provocation of *The Gas*. A similar frame to Platt's was tried in Graham Baker's film *Impulse* (1984), in which a de-inhibiting gas (hinted to be a bio-weapon) is released into the air (or is it the water?) of a small US town. The inhabitants at first display very minor lapses of superego control, which gradually escalate to greater and greater conscienceless violence. Compared with *The Gas*, *Impulse* is in erotic terms quite timid—the main focus is on the release of violent impulses, leading to the ultimately and predictably moralizing point that all loss of impulse control leads to civilizational self-destruction. *The Gas* too leads its protagonists into higher and higher levels of outré violence, culminating in the physical collapse of Kings College Chapel, much like the fall of the House of Usher. But where *Impulse* keeps sex at prudish arm's length, Platt carries the reader into a delirium in which sexual pleasure is both real (remember, porn is about arousal) and also critical. It is the visceral ambivalence that creates the comedy.

The Gas begins with a big technical accident that causes everything that happens in the story, every act of fucking and fighting. It is a strong science-fictional novum. One can imagine a work of fantasy in which something like this happens magically. Perhaps a wizard has lain an indiscriminate fuck-curse on the solid citizens. Perhaps an evil demiurge with a sick sense of humor is playing

games with the human condition. Those might be interesting stories that could reveal things about the imagination and culture. What a material accident contributes specifically is that the orgy of impulse that tears bourgeois society apart and reprograms it is caused in a world like ours, by people like us, through hyper-rational technologies that do not surprise us all that much.

This is at the core of much sf. In order for a story to go into motion, for anything to happen that requires a telling, the equilibrium of a predictable life must be upset. In a fantasy, that disturbance usually has a great will behind it. In an adventure story, some natural challenges impinge on the protagonists. Many sf stories, especially since the 1960s, hinge on some sort of large-scale accident. Often it is an accident of a smoothly operating technology on which humanity massively depends, sending the system out of kilter, requiring the handy protagonists to fix or to adapt to it. Sometimes it is an accidental discovery that changes all relationships. Sometimes it is not the problem but the solution that is provided by an accident, as when the mad scientist or Martian invader's hyper-intelligent plans succumb to unforeseen weak links in their systems. Accidents are required for the technological regime to change, in one way or another.

From this perspective, sf reprises Virilio's concept of the accident as the censored negative dimension of positivist technological progress:

Every technology produces, provokes, and programs a specific accident. For example: when they invented the railroad, what did they invent? An object that allowed you to go fast, which allowed you to progress—a vision *à la* Jules Verne, positivism, evolutionism. But at the same time they invented the railway catastrophe.... I believe that from now on, if we wish to continue with technology ... we must think about both the substance and its accident—substance being both the substance and its accident. The negative side of technology and speed was censored. (32)

Let us linger a bit with this intriguing passage. The railway accident has become something of a primal scene of this essential oneness of the technological “substance” and its inherent accident-waiting-to-happen. Consider Wolfgang Schivelbusch's similar meditations in *The Railway Journey*:

One might ... say that the more civilized the schedule and the more efficient the technology, the more catastrophic its destruction when it collapses. There is an exact ratio between the level of the technology with which nature is controlled, and the degree of severity of its accidents. The pre-industrial era did not know any technological accidents in that sense. In Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, “Accident” is dealt with as a grammatical and philosophical concept, more or less synonymous with coincidence. The pre-industrial catastrophes were natural events, natural accidents. They attacked the objects they destroyed from the outside, as storms, floods, thunderbolts, and hailstones. After the Industrial Revolution, destruction by technological accident came from the inside. The technical apparatuses destroyed themselves by means of their own power. The energies tamed by the steam engine and delivered by it as regulated mechanical performance destroyed that engine itself in the case of an accident. The increasingly rapid vehicles of transportation tended to destroy themselves and each other totally, whenever they collided. The higher the degree of technical intensification (pressure, tension,

velocity, etc.) of a piece of machinery, the more thorough-going was its destruction in the case of dysfunction. (131)

The natural progress of this internal development of the empirical technosphere is toward a point of ultimate “intensification,” nuclear war, which produces the most complete destruction. Science fiction has, of course, imagined far more elegantly intense technologies and more complete catastrophes—arguably, this has been one of its most dependable attractions, attaining what has come to be called “apocalypse porn.” Virilio’s invocation of Verne is richer than he realizes. Much of the Vernean line of positivistic-romantic sf, which is arguably the dominant one until the end of World War II, does seem to thrive in the repression of the technological negative. In psychosexual terms, we might say that this censorship leads to a build-up of frustrated orgasmic energy associated with these gigantic technologies, in which the phallic social identities of modern Western societies have invested so much. It is in the icons of nuclear explosions in the late 1940s and early 1950s that a certain hypostasis, at once horrifying and fascinating, more-real-than-real and hyper-symbolic, of this progress seems to be achieved: the images of fiery mushroom clouds in which the phallus and the orgasm, the tool and the effect, are finally one. With those images, in which the highest achievements of technology manifest as a destructive force that only the gods were imagined to possess in the past, the turn is made, in sf as in empirical experience, away from the positivity of technological progress to the negative immanence of the accident.

The Gothic line, from Mary Shelley through Wells and beyond, had continuously reflected the conservative social fears of technology as a womb of accidents. But even in that tradition, the dangers were perceived mainly in the frailty and weakness of human agents, as if the world-destroying danger of insensate mechanical systems were too ironic to contemplate. With the atomic bomb, the Gothic line becomes the most adequate one to deal with the nuclear sublime, and accidents become central to sf—on a spectrum from unforeseen human or indeed non-human monkey-wrenches in an uptight rational system (*Dr. Strangelove* [1964]; *Skynet*), to bugs in the system (*The Fly* [1958; 1986]), unintended awakenings of repressed monsters (*Godzilla* [1954]), unpredictable beneficent effects of natural systems (*War of the Worlds*), the accidental emergence of both destroyers and preservers (most comic-book superheroes), and the random discovery of agents of cultural and species survival (*Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* [1985]). Most of all, the catastrophe, which was once the domain of sublime natural forces like comets and volcanoes, is transformed into the secret sharer of technoscience.

Platt wrote *The Gas* as the heyday of the British *petit apocalypse*—typified by the works of John Wyndham and John Christopher, films such as Val Lewton’s *The Day The Earth Caught Fire* (1961), and the simultaneously mythicized and deconstructed versions by J.G. Ballard—was winding down. (The US counterparts were George R. Stewart’s *Earth Abides* (1949), the Lot stories of Ward Moore, and *Panic in Year Zero* [1962].) In the model version of that story, a major catastrophe that is usually ambiguously both natural and social-

technological disrupts the balance between natural and cultural orders, throwing social life in Britain into turmoil. The stories are usually told about people living in the middlest middle class, who have sufficient education and wordliness to manage their escape and the reconstitution of some semblance of a petit-bourgeois social order, yet lack the wealth and power to withdraw into enclaves. Platt is uninterested in any larger imperial melancholia. His target is the way the *petite apocalypse* is told—and the disavowed pleasures it provides—and he goes about it with a satirical rigor matched only by Ballard's *Crash* (1973), a work with which it has much in common. As a satire on the *petite apocalypse* plot, *The Gas* is solid enough. Platt was a central figure of New Worlds as an editor and designer and one can feel the withering scorn against conventional British sf. But *The Gas* has more than intra-generic historical significance. It is also a brilliant comic satire of repressive desublimation.

8. From Repressive Desublimation to Comic Resublimation. Let us imagine a pornographic spectrum, from utopian to dystopian. In the utopian, sex acts are free of guilt, shame, and physical obstacles. There is universally reciprocated affection and consent, or at least universal desire to exchange pleasure. Polymorphous attachment and orgasm represent the consummation of human existence, and they are not bound to reproduction and commerce. One can imagine utopian porn plots galore adapted to the communal happy ending required by comedy. At the other pole: dystopian porn, dominated by rage, hatred, cruelty, and shame. Here the purpose is to involve the reader/spectator in perversion—taking pleasure in what the audience and artist all understand to be injurious to others, indeed in the spirit of harm. I do not mean playful bondage and domination fantasies with safe words, but emphatic sadism and self-injury, taking pleasure in—and constructing one's sexual self through—collective and individual self-destruction in sex.

Linda Williams established in *Hard Core* (1999) that most mainstream pornographic films in the 1970s and 1980s had a utopian charge, depicting fantasy worlds in which sex is linked to happiness. Since then, such writers as Annie Sprinkle have consciously developed the rich concept of a "pornotopian" imaginary, which, like most utopian visions, leads quickly to sf:

I have a vision for the future where all the necessary sex education will be available for everyone; there will be no more need for abortion, no more sexually transmitted diseases. No one will ever go hungry for sex because there will be sex kitchens all over town serving sex instead of soup. Sex is a powerful healing tool which will be used regularly in hospitals and psychiatric clinics. We will learn how to use orgasm to prevent and cure disease as some of the ancient tantrics and Taoists did. Sex workers will be highly respected for the important work they do and desire will be decriminalized. Betty Dodson will be able to realize her dream of having orgasms across America on TV. She'll raise enough money to end world hunger. Fetish lingerie and sex toys will be freely distributed to all people. People will be able to make love without touching if they choose. Men will be able to have multiple orgasms without ejaculating so they can maintain erections for as long as they want. Women will ejaculate. It will be possible to make love anywhere in public and not be impolite to watch. No one will care what gender

people have sex with. In the future, everybody will be so sexually satisfied, there'll be an end to violence, rape and war. We will establish contact with extra-terrestrials and they will be very sexy. (qtd. Morris)

We can recognize porno-dystopian visions in such works as *120 Days of Sodom* and *Crash*. Most pornography mixes these extremes, and indeed most porn is closely associated with satire, the genre in which utopian and dystopian visions are most often mixed. No matter how liberated the sexual imagination might be, porn's characters are usually embedded in social worlds rife with taboos of all kinds—so much so that even an artist who wished to depict innocent polymorphous perversity would soon enough run up against social authorities and norms whose very existence depends on sexual repression. And if not the characters, then the audiences. So the more concrete the depiction of a world, the more obstacles there are to imaginary sexual happiness.

The Gas is indisputably a satire. At first it appears to target sf's cozy catastrophes. *The Gas* jokes about the archetypal motifs of escape, the quest for a safe haven, protecting the family and young womanhood, preserving virtue under trial. Over all is the basic science-fictional curse: a technology that compels people to do things they do not want to do.

But wait... there's the rub. After a while, under the influence of the Gas, people do in fact want to have orgasms with others, and our protagonists are less afraid of fucking inappropriate others, or even of strangers fucking their loved ones, than they are being separated from them, or prevented from fucking.¹² If porn is truly about private fantasies, it is notable that in *The Gas* the technologically-induced compulsion to have sex leads people to come together into larger and larger groups, into communities of sex, however dysfunctional they may be. The novel will not tell us whether they become destructive because uninhibited sexual desire is inherently destructive, or because of the speed and the intensity of their artificial induction. But we have intimations.

In *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900), Henri Bergson notes that a typical move of the comic is to have characters focus their attention not on an idea, but on a literal-physical embodiment of it:

"We laugh if our attention is diverted to the physical in a person when it is the moral that is in question," is a law we laid down in the first part of this work. Let us apply it to language. Most words might be said to have a PHYSICAL and a MORAL meaning, according as they are interpreted literally or figuratively. Every word, indeed, begins by denoting a concrete object or a material action; but by degrees the meaning of the word is refined into an abstract relation or a pure idea. If, then, the above law holds good here, it should be stated as follows: "A comic effect is obtained whenever we pretend to take literally an expression which was used figuratively"; or, "Once our attention is fixed on the material aspect of a metaphor, the idea expressed becomes comic." (106)

The locus classicus of this law is in the concluding scene of Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* (411 BCE), when the goddess Peace appears on stage to emblemize the political peace agreement the Greek women have managed to extract from their sex-starved men. The symbolic goddess manifests physically as a beautiful

naked woman, and the warriors distractedly agree to the principle she represents as they ogle her sexy body. This is the principle behind all such comic episodes in which the physical ritual is mistaken for the idea or emotion it represents—a funeral for grieving, a wedding for marriage, a graduation for maturation, a honeymoon for licensed sex, etc. The same principle holds for most satire, and represents the zone where comedy and satire generally overlap. It is the principle of literalization of metaphor, long considered also one of the characteristic moves of science fiction. And when the principle is applied to the metaphorical power of sexuality in culture and science, pornography is a suitable style—maybe even the most appropriate one—of satiric-comic literalization.

The gas of the *The Gas* is precisely such a satiric-comic literalized metaphor, on a grand scale. It is the sublimated, purified essence of technoscience and sf. With *The Gas*, the putative secret dimension of sf and technoscience—its symbolic dimension of displacement and sublimation—is comically replaced by its literalization: sf that is about sex and violence caused by science, rather than sublimated by it. If sf is supposed to be an institution of displacement/sublimation, the comedy comes when it mistakes its purpose by looking straight at the presublimated cause-and-effect: sex and violence.

That is not as simple an operation as it sounds. After all, Platt's novel is itself an sf novel, which is supposedly a bona-fide form of sublimation. How does this work: a sublimation that reveals by desublimating? To approach this, we must read *The Gas* as a bold work of its own time, the late 1960s and the cultural transition from the Protestant ethic of capitalism to what Herbert Marcuse termed the regime of repressive desublimation.

Marcuse argued in *One Dimensional Man* (1964) that in a confidently administered capitalism the requirements of the Protestant ethic no longer served the purposes of the hyper-producing mode of production. To discourage excessive saving (of energies and money), the ruling order had to lessen libidinal constraints to inspire people to spend (energy and money). Actually acquiring the objects that gave personal pleasure was to be encouraged in individuals, in order to prevent the consolidation of resistant social energies that might lead to revolutionary replacement of the ruling order with one that satisfies higher, collective utopian desires. Marcuse called this process "repressive desublimation"—the release of pleasure in a manageable way in order to maintain more secure control over the people's consciousness. Arguably, one of the most prominent examples of it was the sudden semi-respectability of porn, along with strategic uses of "sexual liberation."

Marcuse's theory is similar to Freud's theory of jokes—a little bit of the id is intentionally vented, like a gas, to release pressure on the ego, and then the lid on the unconscious container is quickly replaced. Thus repressive desublimation and jokes simultaneously acknowledge the pressures and disavow them. Artists who have relied on various kinds of sublimation, and hence a certain puritanical economy in the expression of sex, find themselves in a paradoxical situation. Without the cultural taboos restricting the overt expression of sexual drives, they can lose the entire repressed dimension to which all formal and figural techniques of art refer indirectly. Sexual activity—from empirical seduction to fucking—

would then, arguably, replace art as a source of pleasure, on the principle that folks would always prefer an orgasm to an afternoon decoding *Ulysses*. Although pornography is not the only artistic form favored by repressive desublimation (Marcuse was more worried about countercultural practices that distracted people from higher emancipatory goals), it is not unreasonable to see the conversion of all art into porn as the strategy's desired horizon.

Artists might try to counter this by affirming the value of some kinds of repression over others, essentially moralizing in the interests of art. But such asceticism can only speak to a small coterie when the world offers immediate pleasures. Platt takes an original and contrary tack: comic resublimation. *The Gas*'s sex and violence are not displaced or sublimated; by comparison, even *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and *Crash* are prissy. And yet, for a reader of sf or even of comic satire, the generic forms are unavoidable sublimations.

She was screaming, he was shouting, they were both coming, the car was a rocketship aimed at the stars, all the jets were firing, colours flashed in front of his eyes. (Platt 29)

It does not stop there. In *The Gas*, sexual pleasure is forced on everyone affected; and as the story develops, sexual violence takes over—but for the reader all is contained in a comic display. In Platt's world, the reader can have cake and eat it too—desublimated sex and “the old ultra-violence,” in the containing form of a finely crafted comic satire. Comedy is in control, and a new, utterly uninhibited, polymorphously perverse utopian society, yet one still based on a petit-bourgeois nuclear family (of course!) is introduced. Pornography becomes the pretext of visionary satirical comedy.

This is a form of cognitive estrangement. It is probably not the one Suvinians have in mind, for not only are the conditions of the world (i.e., that technoscience is based on displaced sexual repression and aggression) estranged, but so are the media that do the estranging, namely, pornography and sf. *The Gas* cannot actually conclude beyond its R. Crumb-like ending if it is to avoid the containment and moralizing so characteristic of conventional sf. So it must, like its namesake, leave us to wonder whether it has dissipated or changed the world.

NOTES

1. This is attributed to Platt by Loompanics online publicity material.
2. This is noted on the *AllExperts* webpage devoted to *A Feast Unknown* (online).
3. *Anal Planet* is apparently a parody of *Forbidden Planet*; there are several films titled *Lust in Space*, one of which is apparently a *Dr. Who* parody; the number of *Star Trek* porn parodies staggers the imagination. From all accounts the *Star Trek* franchise managers have adopted a laissez-faire policy regarding copyright infringement, hence the many explicit invocations of the series title. For a taste, see *io9*'s “To Boldly Go There: A History of Star Trek Porn, With Clips” (online).
4. The only attempt at a serious bibliography that I have been able to find has been compiled by Kenneth R. Johnson (see his “SF Pornography” website). Johnson's list is unreliable, since it includes only publications by houses identified exclusively with pornographic materials. To quote Johnson:

In compiling this bibliography the determination to include or exclude a book was not made on the basis of its sexual content, but on the basis of who the publisher was. A book was only

included if it was determined that its publisher was one who specialized in sex books and published little else. To make this determination required a broad examination of any given publisher's output, coupled with a detailed knowledge of the history and development of the modern paperback book, and an awareness of their distribution patterns. (Johnson, online)

The method is reasonable, but clearly profoundly limited.

5. The exact passage apparently reads: "There's only one good test of pornography. Get twelve normal men to read the book, and then ask them, 'Did you get an erection?' If the answer is 'Yes' from a majority of the twelve, then the book is pornographic" (Auden, *The Table Talk of W.H. Auden*, "March 17, 1947"). See "Quotations from W.H. Auden."

6. Delany's ambiguous approach allows "straightforward" pornography to be treated simultaneously as a legitimate style, and also as subliterary. Delany strategically accepts (perhaps "entertains" is more accurate) the Auden-Tynan-Burgess notion of pornography as being purely functional (i.e., masturbatory), so that any surplus meaning pornographic writing might convey would be considered *excessive*. This excess essentially *queers* the porn into aesthetic discourse: "If we shift attention to the aesthetic excess produced at the margins of ... sexual encounters ... we find comments on, and models for, new subjectivities beyond the immediate pleasures of reading them" (Melzer 162). I am suspicious of this formulation, since I consider the model of purely functional porn writing spurious. That model seems to imply that only *perverse* porn is aesthetic.

7. See Kravets, Waddington.

8. See Csicsery-Ronay, 146-47.

9. I have coined this expansion of Brian Aldiss's famous sneering term "cosy catastrophe" not only because many critics have shown that many of these novels are not particularly "cosy," but also to intimate that their agents and points of view represent specifically those of the post-imperial British petit bourgeoisie.

10. See "Report."

11. See "Pentagon reveals rejected chemical weapons" and "US military pondered love not war." This consummately comical project would, if it could be achieved, prove that homosexuality is biologically distinct from heterosexuality, and would consequently undermine almost every argument of the religious right against homosexuality. From the other end, the notion of a gay combat army might not sound like a bad idea to students of *The Iliad*.

12. It is interesting to speculate what the philosophical consequences would have been, had the Machines of *The Matrix* produced a matrix-world of humano-bonobo utopian fucking, the "coppertops" programmed with functionally inexhaustible horniness and affection for each other.

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ABSTRACT

Charles Platt's pornographic fantasy *The Gas* (1970) is not only a bona fide work of sf, but also a significant work in the genre. By obscenely parodying the well-established British subgenre of the petit apocalypse, *The Gas* satirizes both the sublimation strategies of sf and the repressive desublimation of post-1960s pornography.

Wendy Gay Pearson

Born to Be Bron: Destiny and *Destinerrance* in Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton*

"Biology is destiny."—anonymous

"There are certain things that just have to be done. And when you come to them, if you're a man ... you just have to do them."—Samuel R. Delany, *Trouble on Triton* (241)

What (Real) Men Do. Bron, the protagonist of Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton* (1976), has, as indicated in my epigraph, quite strong feelings about what it is men do and should do. Of course, it is probably appropriate to modify this comment, which occurs at a crucial point in the narrative, with Delany's own observation that Bron is a "hateful man," largely because he "manufacture[s] perfectly fanciful motivations for what everyone else is doing" in order to rationalize his own behavior (*Trouble* 312). The question is, then, whether Bron's statement about male obligation functions as an ideological commitment or as another fanciful motivation, this time for himself. But the answer—unsurprisingly, given the ambiguity noted in the novel's subtitle, "An Ambiguous Heterotopia"—is that these rationales are inextricably imbricated with each other.

Bron is an immigrant to the capital city of Tethys on Triton from the relatively conservative world of Mars, where he worked as a prostitute for a clientele of older women. Bron's story plays out against the backdrop of a (mainly economic) war of independence between the outer satellites and the inner planets (Earth and Mars), which escalates to a single day of violence in which 70% of Earth's population is killed while a small number of Tritonians die as a result of gravity fluctuations within Tethys's Shield. Early in the story, Bron meets and becomes infatuated with a woman named Spike, head of a theater troupe; given the opportunity, Bron joins a delegation to Earth, led by his housemate Sam, a Tritonian politician, because Spike and her troupe are performing there. Bron is briefly arrested and interrogated by Earth police; back on Triton, Bron exaggerates his experiences of the gravity fluctuation into a tale of heroism in which he rescues his boss, Audri, her coop mates, and their children. Spike's refusal to accept Bron's desire to be the center of her life leads him to try to remedy his unhappiness through an act of heroic self-sacrifice—by pursuing gender and sexual-orientation reassignment in order to become the kind of submissive heterosexual woman that he himself seeks. Ironically, he hopes in the process to insure the survival of the ideological principle of masculinist heterosexism he defends in the epigraph above.

Bron makes this statement about men having to do what has to be done to his friend Lawrence immediately after his sex change. As many commentators have noted, Bron is very much a misfit in the polymorphously fluid social ordering that is Triton's version of heterotopia. Instead, he harks back to an era—one that never

existed on Triton at all and is very much a nostalgic fantasy on his part—when men were men and women were there to worship and admire them. As a heterosexual man on Triton (and it is apparent that, on Triton, “heterosexual” does not equate to heteronormative), Bron’s misfortune is that he desires a woman who will adopt this position relative to his own assumption of masculinity. Lawrence, with whom Bron lives in a non-specific all-male co-op (its lack of specificity is in contrast with co-ops that cater exclusively to heterosexuals, gay men, etc.), tells Bron that

your problem is ... that essentially you are a logical pervert, looking for a woman with a mutually compatible logical perversion. The fact is, the mutual perversion you are looking for is very, very rare—if not nonexistent. You’re looking for someone who can enjoy a certain sort of logical masochism. If it were *just* sexual, you’d have no problem finding a partner at all. Hang them from the ceiling, burn their nipples with matches, stick pins in their buttocks and cane them bloody! There’re gaggles of women, just as there are gaggles of men, who would be delighted to have a six-foot, blond iceberg like you around to play such games with. (212-13; emphasis in original)

Having defined what Bron wants from a woman through a series of oxymorons (“run-around-in-circles-while-you-walk-a-straight-line”) and denounced it as the one thing no woman is going to put up with, “especially when it’s out of bed and simply has no hope of pleasurable feedback,” Lawrence adds that it is fortunate that Bron’s “particular perversion today is extremely rare” (213). Estimating that at most one in five thousand women would be interested in being the woman Bron wants, Lawrence notes that men with Bron’s logical perversion are perhaps one in fifty. Largely as a rhetorical flourish for the benefit of the novel’s contemporary reader, however, Lawrence then contextualizes his comments by adding that this perversion’s rarity in their era is “quite amazing, considering that it once was just about as common as the ability to grow a beard” (213). In other words, what Bron wants is what virtually every heterosexual male is assumed to want (especially when the novel was written), making his desires seem, to the contemporary reader, indistinguishable from those of the “average Joe.”

Guy Davidson has commented in a very insightful essay that the “interrelation of sexual identity, sexual desire, and statistics is a central concern of *Triton*” and that the multiplicity of sexual types on Triton is both an extension of contemporary statistical thinking and a refusal of the (hetero)normativity that statistics are used to justify (104).¹ One of Triton’s more strikingly heterotopian aspects is its profusion of genders and sexualities; combining the predilection of statistics for the proliferation of categories with *Triton*’s insistence on rendering the social through logical and mathematical predictors (instanced both by Ashima Slade’s modular calculus and Bron’s work as a metalogician), the result is, as Davidson notes, an inevitable movement toward “the distinctively ‘postmodern’ fragmentation and lability of identity” (104). While this is certainly the context in which Lawrence, an older gay man, offers his insights to Bron, it is also apparent that his statistics are not altogether accurate. If indeed one man in fifty suffers from Bron’s logical perversion (that is, the desire to be a patriarchal male within a binary system in which men are human and women are not), then Bron

should have no difficulty finding a mate after her sex change. Indeed, given the rarity of women like Bron, men like Bron should be flocking to her. But instead, Bron ends up alone and possibly psychotic.

It is one thing to know that Bron's sex change does not—and cannot—have its desired result; it is quite another to contemplate this in relation to Bron's statement to Lawrence, immediately after the operation, that there are some things a man just has to do. Indeed, one of the novel's major ironies is that it is Bron's view of what men have to do that leads him to become a woman—an act that is, in his mind, the ultimate sacrifice, since he refuses to credit women as human. His sex change is significantly motivated by his insistence to Lawrence that “[w]omen don't understand. Faggots don't understand either” (214). Having just returned from a trip to Earth, with which Triton is at war, Bron makes it very clear through his actions that he is at once almost hysterically emotional and something of a coward, thus rendering satirical his insistence on his masculine bravery, his supposed ability to do what is necessary for the “survival of the species.” His argument with Lawrence about what it means to be Bron (i.e., a “man” from his own perspective and a “logical sadist” from Lawrence's) finally prompts Bron into a desperate rush to the clinic where he has his physical sex changed and his desires refixed (to the “female plurality configuration” [229], which is basically female heterosexuality). He is, in his own mind, doing what is necessary for the survival of the species—not having understood, either from experience or from the conversation in which Lawrence spells it out to him, that, in fact, the human species as Bron understands it no longer exists. After the operation, Bron tells Lawrence:

Humanity. They used to call it “mankind.” And I remember reading once that some women objected to that as too exclusive. Basically, though, it wasn't exclusive enough! Lawrence, regardless of the human race, what gives the species the only value it has are men, and particularly those men who can do what I did. (231)

Delany brings home the farcical nature of Bron's ideological delusions when he has Lawrence interpret “those men who can do what I did” as, “Change sex?” (232). Of course, this is the literal truth, but Bron must now deny it because, after all, she is “not a man anymore” and so can forego a man's natural modesty about his supposed bravery in attempting to rescue Audri and her children (232). Still, it is apparent that Bron's insistence that men do what they have to do, what is necessary for the survival of the species, causes him to become a woman—or, in more contemporary terms, an MTF transsexual (which raises an issue I will come back to later). In Bron's terms, the irony of being a “real man” is that his destiny is to become a “real woman.”²

Elegy for Wannabe Patriarchs. As Davidson, Edward Chan, Tom Moylan, and others have noted, Bron's devotion to outdated patriarchal ideologies makes it impossible for him to follow the ways of Triton; his deviation from those apparently countless possibilities lies at the heart of the novel's critique of contemporary epistemology (particularly epistemologies of “identity” such as are subtended under the headings of “gender,” “sexuality,” and “race”). The novel

engages in a form of cultural critique that is dependent on a heterotopian dismantling of the apparent naturalness of the social ordering predominant at the time it was written (and not that much changed today). Delany himself brings the question of heterotopia into play when he uses the term in his subtitle and then quotes it in an epigraph from Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les Choses*, 1966). Chan points out that the vast majority of critics have simplified—and perhaps oversimplified—Delany's use of the term by translating it as little more than a “contemporary or postmodern updating of the utopian impulse,” one that makes more allowance for difference than is common in utopian literature (181). Arguing that, instead of seeing *Triton* as a postmodern utopia, it is more productive to treat *Triton* as a heterotopian narrative, Chan trenchantly remarks that “utopian narratives extend the dreams of our epistemologies, while heterotopian narratives call those epistemologies into question. Utopia tries to imagine a possibility we might entertain as an ideal to which we might aspire; heterotopia hits us over the head with the shock of what we imagine as social difference” (182). Chan's use of heterotopia agrees in many essentials with Kevin Hetherington's discussion of the term in *The Badlands of Modernity*, where he argues that heterotopias “are spaces in which an alternative social ordering is performed. These are spaces in which a new way of ordering emerges that stands in contrast with the taken-for-granted mundane idea of social order that exists within society” (40). Most importantly, for Hetherington, heterotopias are spaces that rebalance questions of freedom and social control in ways that may be shocking, fascinating, and/or horrifying in their deviation from expected norms. One of the ambiguities of *Triton* is indeed that it takes advantage of both these positions, providing the reader at once with a heterotopian narrative and an encounter with a heterotopian space that may be as shocking, fascinating, confusing, and horrifying as Bron, the immigrant from Mars, often finds it.

While social order itself can refer to many things, both in *Triton* and on *Triton* it seems that the categories Bron butts up against and is unable to reorder to his satisfaction fall into two main classes: social space and questions of identity and relationship. That the social spaces of *Triton* are ordered in such a way as to permit a proliferation of possible identities and relationships is, in fact, a significant part of Bron's problem. The ordering of *Triton* is similarly a potential problem for the reader, however, particularly given the demand to read any form of “-topia” in relationship to “utopia.” Thus one of the reasons why the reader, like Bron, may end up in a variety of possible interpretative spaces that do not seem to make sense, or which have to have a particular sense imposed upon them, is the ambivalence inherent in reading the novel and the difficulty of reaching a particular “place of reading” that locates *Triton* both as science fiction and as queer.³

Epigraphs are important; they function as extradiegetic signposts, possible openings into the unfamiliar landscape laid out before the reader. Delany's epigraphs in *Triton* are not, however, easy signposts on a clearly marked trail, but rather the opening up of possibilities. Delany marks these possibilities in *Triton* in a number of ways: through these epigraphs, especially the first, from Mary Douglas, and the last, from Michel Foucault; through the novel's own cartography

of Triton's apparently heterotopian landscape; and finally through the deliberate inclusion in the text of a number of appendices that serve to remind the reader that this fiction is indeed a fiction, that we may well read *Triton* "as if it were some kind of science fiction" (Goldberg 545) precisely because we are constantly reminded of its science-fictional qualities. One possibility is that we might read *Triton* as the very particular kind of science fiction that Moylan in *Demand the Impossible* labels the "critical utopia"—that is, the utopia that is not a blueprint or an "awful warning," but rather an extended critique of our contemporary and rather un-utopian lives. Another possibility is that, following Chan, we might read its heterotopian questioning of those very epistemologies that utopia expresses as a reiteration of the value of reading *Triton* "as if it were some kind of science fiction."

If I then foreground practices of reading, especially those that mark a text as science-fictional—and Delany has laid out elegantly the ways in which language usage differentiates sf from "mundane" fiction (see "Semiology")—or that mark it as queer (or both), it is precisely because reading practices so thoroughly inform the possible approaches both to sf texts and to queer ones. To read a queer text as if it were some kind of sf, or to read a science-fictional text as if it were in some way queer—these possibilities reiterate two important, but not always conjoined, possibilities for a reading of *Triton* outside of the modes that identify it either as straightforwardly or as critically utopian. The problematics of the former, which uncritically resignifies "heterotopia" as nothing more or less than a utopia that, instead of emphasizing sameness, makes allowance for difference, has already been dealt with in some detail by Chan, Davidson, and Neil Easterbrook. Reading *Triton* as a postmodern utopia not only moves away from Foucault's formulations of heterotopia—formulations important to a reading of the novel precisely because Delany himself cites them—but also succumbs to an impoverished view of difference that, as Eve Sedgwick has pointed out, reverts to the meager axes along which Western epistemologies are able to think about and name it (22).

Chan deals with the problem of distinguishing heterotopia as a utopia-of-difference from heterotopia as an epistemological interrogation by moving away from identifying Triton as a "heterotopia" and towards identifying *Triton* as a heterotopian narrative. One of the consequences of this move is to eliminate some of the ambiguity about the referent for the term "heterotopia," a strategy that enhances the clarity of Chan's reading while losing some of the potential power of the simple fact of ambivalence. Most powerfully, it allows Chan to reinstate Delany's use of Foucault firmly within any consideration of *Triton* as a narrative whose declared purpose is to question Western epistemologies, particularly those that, as Mary Douglas notes in Delany's first epigraph, facilitate the constraint of the physical body by the social body so that "the body itself is a highly restricted medium of expression" (183). *Triton* juxtaposes two epistemes: one, of which Bron is the main and perhaps only proponent, in which the desired ideal is one where the "physical experience of the body ... sustains a particular view of society" (Douglas, qtd. in Delany xiv), and one, subscribed to by the majority of Tritonians, in which the physical experiences of embodiment have so multiplied and proliferated that there is little left to sustain any singular view of society, but

rather only a fragmented series of particular views. In other words, Bron's experience of his body as masculine, which he understands in very specific ways, also sustains a very specific view of what masculinity should mean in society and what sorts of society it should, in turn, sustain. That this is heterotopian, in Foucault's sense, is clear; but clearly it is also science-fictional, in the sense of performing a thought experiment about the effects of heterotopian narrative on Bron's utopian view of utter consonance between his vision of gendered embodiment and the social body. Bron's categories—which are also, of course, those of the hegemonic bodies of our own world—are revealed to be as arbitrary as those of Borges's Chinese encyclopedia (whose links are ordered according to a system that is unfathomable and thus does not appear to be a system at all).⁴ Given Bron's ideological experience of embodiment, of being located in a masculine body that he understands as his destiny (so much so that he gives it up in order to sustain it), the novel is certainly a critique of the idea of biology as destiny. It is also Bron's particular logical perversion that causes him to fixate on the attempt to create consonance between his own experience (or more accurately, his interpretation of that experience) and the social order that surrounds him. In remaking himself, he expects, somehow, that he will remake the world and will, through his personal bravery and sacrifice, fulfill his ultimate destiny: not merely to provide a mate for (those like) himself but to guarantee the "survival of the species."

Biology as *Destinerrance* (Going Nowhere). *Triton* follows approximately four "pseudomonths" in Bron's life at a time when Triton and the other "satellite" colonies are fighting what is basically a war of independence from Earth and Mars. Triton is an essentially anarchist society that allows for a multitude of personal and familial relationships and ways of life; its spaces include the unlicensed sector (or u-l) for those who do not want to subscribe to any of the various forms of social order available to them. Neil Easterbrook has convincingly demonstrated the novel's genealogical relationship to both Robert A. Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), noting not only that all three are set on rebellious moons (respectively, Luna, Anarres, and Triton) and involve variations on anarchist societies, but that they also function as responses to and rethinkings of their predecessors, revisionings that display sf's power as an implicitly dialectical field. Easterbrook concludes that, while Heinlein's Luna Free State may be utopian for a very few, for most (except its author and his spokesmen/avatars) its final configuration is not rational, not anarchic, and most definitely not utopian. Anarres, however, he calls "isotopian," meaning that what the Anarresti seek to establish is not a utopia, but "an egalitarian-universalist system where all individuals are equals" (55). Easterbrook trenchantly notes that, in a place based on multiplicity, "Bron wants to be 'at the center' within a culture with none" (67). Easterbrook understands Triton's multiplicity as a function of its location as a "postmodern liberal utopia" in contradistinction to *The Dispossessed's* "'humanist' liberal utopia" (70).⁵ His argument in this article, published in 1995, reiterates a reading of heterotopia as a type of utopia rather than, as in Chan's

attempt to disambiguate heterotopia as utopia-of-difference from heterotopia as mode of interrogation or form of narrative. The insight, however, that Bron seeks a stable center within a world whose rhizomatic qualities preclude any center at all is a valuable clue to any understanding of Bron (who, unlike Shevek, does not think himself a citizen of utopia). It functions as a focal point for the science-fictional critique not of an epistemology extended to its ideal future state but of our present epistemes.

If destiny is, shall we say, a one-way road to nowhere (which we cannot forget is *ou-topia* [no place]), the Derridean notion of *destinerrance* suggests both the difficulties of staying on track and the irony that, being on track to nowhere (since *ou-topia* has been inherent in *eu-topia* [the good place] from Thomas More's first usage of "utopia"), *destinerrance* may be no bad thing. The word itself functions compoundly (not unlike "utopia" itself): it implies both errancy of destination and errancy as destination. It seems to me that *destinerrance*, when applied to *Triton*, provides at least one possible way out of the difficulty of some of the more pragmatic—indeed, paradigmatic—readings of Bron in the critical literature.⁶ In other words, I want to suggest that reading Bron as the anti-hero, subjugated by his own cultural baggage, involves a kind of movement away from reading *Triton* "as if it were some kind of science fiction." The landscape of *Triton* (that is, its hero in Delany's terms) is heterotopia: a vast, sprawling, untidy, littered, colorful, freakish, discomfiting, convivial, variegated, and ultimately chaotic and disordered *mise-en-scène*, one whose categories make no sense to someone like Bron, who insists on "the order of things"—"things" being, in this context, most especially those axes of difference by which the contemporary world determines social hierarchy. Triton as heterotopia is the backdrop for a society of people who have freedom both from basic scarcity and from the "order of things" as we know them: they are thus also free to make choices about their lives in ways that are not measured by economic necessity, social hierarchy, familial dynasty, or even biological imperative, as we understand these factors today. The secondary character, the episteme, is thus the social hierarchies of sex and gender—or, as Carl Freedman would have it, "the problematics of sex, gender and social marginality" (146).

Far from being, as Seth McEvoy argues, a novel that fails to engage with feminist ideas, *Triton*'s story is almost entirely *about* gender relations, sexuality, and the potential construction of alternative modes of relationship. In *Triton*, Delany's most brilliant feat is, in some ways, that he actually depicts for the reader, in vivid technicolor, precisely those "as yet unforeseen kinds of relationship" that Foucault talks about as potentially arising from the gay male community and as being particularly frightening to those most committed to heteronormativity ("Sexual Choice" 153)—a group that, on Triton, appears to be limited to Bron.⁷ On Triton, both marriage and prostitution are illegal, but virtually every other possible combination of human relationship abounds: Tritonians recognize 40 or 50 genders and nine sexual orientations; they also believe that the ideal family situation for raising a child involves "at least five close adult attachments—that's living, loving, feeding and diaper-changing attachments—preferably with five different sexes" (254). Henning Bech's

analysis of the traditions of relationship “in the homosexual world” could very nearly be a description of life on Triton:

apart from long-term monogamous couples, there are e.g. serial monogamies; couples with institutionalised infidelity; marriages of convenience; organized *ménage-à-trois* set-ups; close, steady, non-sexual two-person friendships; ways of life that centre on the social life of organizations, friendship networks or pub environments; intense intercourse with pornography; and combinations of these. (147)⁸

It is worth noting that in *Stars in My Pockets Like Grains of Sand* (1986), Delany constructs a protagonist who is nearly the perfect opposite of the perpetually frustrated Bron: Marq Dyeth, who finds in Rat Korga “precisely the image of [his] desire” (Roland Barthes, qtd. in Fox, *Conscientious Sorcerers* 115). It is this combination of the rhizomatic with the resolutely particular that characterizes Delany’s quite consistent depiction of sexuality and desire in his writing: people’s desires differ across a wide range of potentialities, including the potential for the specificity of desiring only men who wear blue running shoes or who chew their thumbnails.⁹ This is what Bron does not understand; his desire is for a category, not an individual (a logical consequence of binary notions of sexual orientation). As he is a heterosexual male who believes himself to be stronger, braver, more truthful than women, their lack of respect for and submission to his desires, indeed to his very being, remains incomprehensible to him. His response, as noted above, is to become what he wants: woman-as-category, someone who does not mind being treated as less than human, who can say with a straight face that “what gives the species the only value it has are men” (231).

In fact, changing sex on Triton is quite commonplace and Bron is not the only transsexual character in the novel. Delany takes some care to contrast him with Sam, a huge, jovial black man “with a large magnificent body which he always wore (rather pretentiously, Bron thought) naked” (25). Sam is the character Bron most envies and also the only one whom, after her sex change, Bron makes an attempt to approach, signifying how closely Sam seems—to Bron—to fit the category of “man.” As is his wont, however, Bron makes up an entire backstory for Sam only to have every single aspect of it disproved. Not only is Sam *not* some sad-sack salesman “rotten with neurosis,” as Bron assumes, he is actually a very powerful politician who mainly lives in a family commune on Iapetus with “five men, eight women and nine children” (27). Even Bron’s grinding jealousy of Sam’s physique proves ill-founded, as Sam admits that he started life as a “rather unhappy, sallow-faced, blonde, blue-eyed (and terribly myopic) waitress ... with a penchant for other sallow, blonde, blue-eyed waitresses, who, as far as the young and immature me could make out, were all just gaga over the six-foot-plus Wallunga and Katanga emigrants” (126). Making the opposite decision to Bron, Sam becomes what the women he desires want. Bron, however, is already what the women he wants are supposed to want, so that his choices remain completely solipsistic and consistently unsatisfactory. Having cast Sam in the role of “real man,” Bron first discovers that he is wrong about the “naturalness” of

Sam's masculinity (biology, for Sam, is quite distinctly not destiny) and later that her womanliness utterly fails to attract him.

Bron is caught in the tensions between destiny, destination, and *destinerrance*; this, quite ironically, makes him in many ways the most utopian character in this ambiguously heterotopian world. After all, Bron has a blueprint for a better world, even if that blueprint is rooted in some nostalgic fantasy of an antiquated realm of sexual hierarchy. This is a fantasy that coruscates on every level, even the physical (a nod back to Mary Douglas): noting that women and men are the same size in the present day, Bron argues with her therapist, Brian (who is also a woman from Mars), that perhaps the depiction of women as smaller than men in Earth's history was based on fact, not on a collective illusion brought about by patriarchal practices of sexual selection. Heterotopias, Foucault tells us, do not afford consolation, even of the chimerical variety; by contrast, they "are disturbing, probably because they make it impossible for us to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'" (qtd in *Triton* 292). It is thus inevitably Bron who seeks the consolation of utopia, not the discomfort of heterotopia; it is Bron, then, who has a destination, albeit one at which he can never arrive.

Why *destinerrance* and what does it mean? The term, as it is most commonly used, comes to us via Derrida and a certain deconstructive tendency in postmodern philosophy. Yet, to cite *destinerrance* only as a tool of deconstruction is to miss the extent of its potency as an analytical implement.¹⁰ As indicated earlier, the term itself is a play on words, evoking both an errancy *of* destination and errancy *as* destination. We mistake the desired end, but the end we seek is also the mistake. In an interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell, Pheng Cheah asserts that "if you maintain a sharp distinction between the ideal and the real and you see the ideal as the beyond from which to critique the real, you can't really argue how the ideal is to be connected to the real. It seems to me that is what Derrida, for instance, doesn't do—he doesn't separate the ideal from the real, but regards each term as the *différance* of the other" (Cheah and Grosz 33).

This is an important distinction, particularly when we turn again from Derrida to Delany and, via Delany, to Bron; after all, Bron's methodology throughout is to use the ideal (his belief in a perfect, pre-Tritonian femininity counterpoised to an equally ideal masculinity that he understands as his true male self) to critique the real, which is to say the lived experiences of genders in Tritonian society—experiences that are linked to certain discourses of freedom of choice, of economic stability and accessibility, and of embodied features (such as race) that, to us, read as identities but, to Tritonians, are unstable aspects of a life that seems to be lived in a kind of permanent *jouissance*. It is not that everyone on Triton is reasonably happy, or happily reasonable, as Bron decrees of himself on the novel's very first page, but rather that modes of embodied being on Triton, and thus of identity at a certain level, are inherently unstable, an instability that includes and is not diminished by the possibility of temporalities that provide the appearance of stability in certain circumstances: the u-l, or unlicensed sector,

changes, as Bron notes, all the time, yet it never changes at all. Furthermore, if we apply the idea of *destinerrance* to the concept of utopia more generally, it becomes clear that utopias must require this sharp distinction between the ideal and the real. In other words, utopias themselves can only be reached by a process of *destinerrance*, both by accidentally going the wrong way but arriving in the right place (the fate of so many travellers through strange lands, up to and including Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* [1915]) and by setting out for the wrong destination (every utopia, after all, is someone's nightmare). And, since utopia is more a critical concept than a realizable destination, contemporary utopics have no choice but to deal with their inherent *destinerrance*.

Derrida himself describes *destinerrance* most clearly in his 1993 interview with Peter Brunette and David Wills when—responding to a question about the “relations between thought and communication, in the most basic sense” (11)—he links *destinerrance* to the functioning of a viral code, both within the body and within electronic circuitry:

The virus is in part a parasite that destroys, that introduces disorder into communication. Even from the biological standpoint, this is what happens with a virus; it derails a mechanism of the communicational type, its coding and decoding. On the other hand, it is something that is neither living nor nonliving; the virus is not a microbe. And if you follow these two threads, that of a parasite which disrupts destination from the communicative point of view—disrupting writing, inscription, and the coding and decoding of inscription—and which on the other hand is neither alive nor dead, you have the matrix of all that I have done since I began writing.... If we follow the intersection between AIDS and the computer virus as we now know it, we have the means to comprehend, not only from a theoretical point of view but also from the sociohistorical point of view, what amounts to a disruption of absolutely everything on the planet, including police agencies, commerce, the army, questions of strategy. All those things encounter the limits on their control, as well as the extraordinary force of those limits. It is as if all that I have been suggesting for the past twenty-five years is prescribed by the idea of *destinerrance* ... the supplement, the pharmakon, all the undecidables—it's the same thing. (12)

This brings us to an interesting place: if Bron were a typical character in a traditional utopia, his role would be to function as the supplement. But *Triton* is a heterotopia; it suffers, if one can use that word, from a dearth of the ideal, even though it is factually threatened by a form of economic warfare that bears a certain resemblance to the effects of a computer virus. Thus Bron's role is to be the one stable character in a world where everyone else is tolerant, if not desirous, of change. If we see heterotopia as “spaces of alternate ordering” in which the social order of modernity can be rethought (Hetherington vii), then it ought also to be possible to see Bron himself as a singular instance of the heterotopian. Yet he is not, precisely because social ordering requires a society to order—and Bron is a single person. Indeed, it is essential that Bron be a single person precisely because he cannot be allowed to offer an alternative social ordering to Triton within the diegesis of the novel. The only space in which he can represent that form of social ordering is within the present process of reading the narrative—

and, in turn, his heterotopian potential there is utterly derailed as the reader becomes increasingly aware that Bron represents the norm of the reader's world, not an alternative to it. Similarly, Bron is not a virus; he is, in fact, unable to infect the world of Lawrence and Audri and Sam at all, yet the world continues to act on him and, even after her sex change, she continues to resist or is unable to find any way of becoming part of the culture in which she lives.

Despite what Bron believes about gender and about him/herself, the undecidability of life on Triton continues to refuse him the consolation of utopia. Indeed, it creates a world and a language that, in many ways, he does not understand and cannot translate. Consider the first few scenes of the novel; they are repeated instances of *destinerrance* at work. Describing himself as a "reasonably happy man," Bron decides to check out five random strangers as a way of discovering "how different [his happiness] made him from those around" (1). Bron is, as Robert Fox notes, an elitist ("Politics" 46); in being different from those around him, he sees himself as better. He scorns the breast bangles on the first man he encounters; condemns the second for wasting wood at his carpentry, a hobby Bron arbitrarily endows him with; and so on. But having looked at the first four people, Bron immediately concludes, in a moment of pure *destinerrance*, that they "were not very good choices for a reasonable and happy man" (4). And yet they were the choices he made. Having looked at four other humans, he decides to look at himself and enters an Ego Booster Booth, where he inserts his ID card and token, only to receive three minutes of static, both visual and aural. Even his reflection is distorted by the red syrup spilled across the screen. Nothing in this scene ever reaches its "proper" end, thus reminding the reader both of its qualities of *destinerrance* and of heterotopia's attack on the orderliness of obviously logical categories (Bron's random choices are not, after all, really intended to be random: they have a clear, if impossible, goal). Indeed, Chan notes that Bron's attempt "to measure his own individuality ... has the result of questioning the purity and sanctity of the category of the individual" (185). From the start, not only does Bron fail to get where he is going (in this case, a measure of his difference from those around him that is intended to cement his centrality within all of the "margins" that make up Triton), but his very attempt reveals the heterotopian nature of Tritonian society—precisely what he does not want to see. The five people he looks at—a handsome sixty-year-old woman with blue breast bangles, the adolescent male with her (also with blue breast bangles), a tall man in maroon coveralls with cages over his head and hands, a young female Mumbler with a cracked yellow bowl, and his distorted self in the screen of the Ego Booster Booth—are part of a syntagm (the crowd in the Plaza of Lights) and reflections of a paradigmatic failure: they have no more logical coherence, at least to the eye of the contemporary reader, than do the elements of Borges' Chinese encyclopedia.

Leaving the booth, Bron ventures into the u-1, where he sees a woman attacked (although it appears to be part of the street theater in which he inadvertently becomes both bit player and audience) by a member of the Rampant Order of Dumb Beasts, a new sect whose goal the woman, Spike, tells him is "putting an end to meaningless communication. Or is it meaningful...? I can

never remember" (12). Bron, in other words, is surrounded from the book's outset by disruptions of communication, problems of mistranslation and misunderstanding, *destinerrance* of many varieties, including his inclination, having met Spike, to wander randomly after her with, literally, no idea where he is going.

Born to be Bron? Thus, while the traditional protagonist of the utopian genre is either a committed citizen of utopia who functions as a tour guide to her own world or a naive visitor from elsewhere (or elsewhen) who must learn the ropes of the new society, Bron, as Moylan has remarked, is one of Triton's "most unhappy and unreasonable residents" (162). Moylan explains Bron's incommensurability in Tritonian society as Delany's "exploration of the failure of a person socialised within the ideological web of Earth and Mars to cast off his male-supremacist, self-deluding behavior and become a new person in an emancipated society" (176). In the critical utopia Moylan understands *Triton* to be, Bron remains, however, "a misfit in utopia" (162). Delany himself provides an alternative view, noting that he does not think "SF *can* be really utopian," but that the novel relies on a shift in the opinion of the "Common Reader," who goes from identifying with Bron and thinking his world repressive to realizing that "Bron is a despicable man—but the society around him is actually fairly good" ("On *Triton*" 302; emphasis in original). Delany goes on to note, in a more general discussion of the relationship between sf and utopia, that

you may have hit upon one of the things that makes SF, or this SF novel, recalcitrant—I mean, why you have to squeeze it to fit under a utopian rubric. To have a term such as "hegemony"—not to mention the surveillance implications behind the Ego Booster Booths—right in the midst of such a "utopian" society, for me, at any rate, leaves the very notion of utopia pretty much shattered. These—and many other—linguistic turns are used in the book precisely for their negative implications. (306)

Delany asserts further that

There are two kinds of characters, I think, in most modern fiction: one is the character you're supposed to identify with. That character is like a suit of clothes you put on in order to have the experiences the character goes through.

The other character is, rather, a case study. Though you can feel sorry for—or be amused by—this character (and even recognize aspects of yourself in the character), if you identify with her or him beyond a certain point, you're misreading the book. (311)

Bron, to Delany at least, is the latter kind of character.

If Bron is not then the hero of *Triton*, is he, as McEvoy contends (and contrary to Delany's own characterization), simply a failed hero, a confused but willing enough guy from the 1970s who fails to make the transition into life on Triton (a.k.a. the future)? Is he, as Moylan argues, the novel's anti-hero, his primary purpose to show the need to be open to difference, to alternatives, to possibilities? Or is he, as Robert Fox suggests in *Conscientious Sorcerers*, a man "whose difficulties can be rooted in our current malaise, which his own twenty-second century has not resolved but merely overdetermined" (114)? Both Moylan and

Fox seem to suggest that Bron's failings are culturally determined—that is, they appear to come down squarely on the constructivist side of the debate about what it is that makes us who we are.

Yet Davidson has recently pointed out that there are many elements of the novel that seem to contradict such a reading. Several scenes suggest that Triton is not wholly aligned with a postmodern notion of fluidity of identity, including the counsellor's warning to the newly female Bron that she will never, in some sense, "be a 'complete' woman," not having lived with that female body the whole of her life (251). Experience of embodiment, as Douglas insists, counts. Similarly, the teenaged Alfred, who is plagued by impotence, gets his desire refixed in an attempt to discover if he is "really" gay, but has it re-refixed when this does not solve his problem. Spike also has herself refixed in order to enter into a relationship with a woman, before returning to her previous desire for tall, blond men (like Bron). "With all three characters ... there is a sense in which an underlying sexual orientation remains as the essence of selfhood, no matter what pyrotechnics of libidinal reconfiguration Tritonian technology makes available" (Davidson 108). The underlying sense of selfhood exhibited by Alfred, Spike, Lawrence, and so on is not, however, contradictory to a type of ludic play with these markers of identity and is, perhaps, one of the profoundly heterotopian moments in the novel; its apparent acceptance of postmodern and constructivist positions seems not to be in consonance with its recognition that there may still be something profoundly essential about one's desires and, indeed, one's sense of self. It is, though, very much in contradistinction to Bron's sense of biology as destiny, a sense that becomes stronger, not weaker, as the novel progresses, so that he moves from plaintively inquiring "what about those of us who only know what we *don't* like?" (104; emphasis in original) to a perverse clarity about his role in Tritonian society and his desire for a woman who can match his patriarchal aspirations by disclaiming her own humanity. So while the novel's heterotopian narrative wreaks havoc on the binary terms of the essentialist/constructivist debate (if only by proliferating many more terms that explode the very binarism of sex/gender), the reader's encounters with members of Tritonian society reinforce the notion that, essential sense of sexual orientation or not, many more options are available, including the option to change.

The rest of the conversation between Brian and Bron (both of them, we should note, now female) is similarly revealing of the destination both of the society Bron lives in and of Bron him/herself. Brian and Bron argue about whether or not Bron, as a woman, is more emotional than Bron was as a man. Brian notes, caustically, that "it would just be very hard to *be* more emotional" than Bron was before his sex change and points out that, in any case, Bron is not like—and does not want to be like—other women. "In one sense, though you are as real a woman as possible, in another sense you are a woman created *by* a man—specifically by the man you were" (251; emphases in original). In this sense, McEvoy's comparison of *Triton* to Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) takes on a certain cogency, but in reverse: in *The Female Man*, by being women in a woman-only world, women become human, a commentary on the fact that, existing in dialectical tension with men, women *qua* women can only be women and not

humans. In *Triton*, Bron, by becoming a woman made by a man, becomes less, rather than more, human. Indeed, Bron-the-woman is specifically designed not to be human, but rather to be defined only in relation to the ideal masculinity that Bron believes himself to possess—or, rather, at this stage in the novel, to have possessed. One of the great ironies here is that Bron-the-woman (or perhaps Bron-the-MTF) arrives at the destination that Bron-the-man intends, only to find that it no more exists than it did when she was a man. In our world, where so many see biology as destiny (particularly given the popular prevalence of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology), Bron's destiny is to demonstrate that biology has nothing to do with it. Assuming that gender/sexuality equals biology and biology equals destiny, Bron arrives—in the ultimate of ironies, given this novel's play with the topic—at his/her utopia, which turns out of course to be “no place” at all.

If Bron is traumatized by the open-ended demands of life on Triton, this suggests perhaps that it is possible to read his failure to become a true citizen of Triton's ambiguous heterotopia as something other than perverse. After all, from a queer perspective, the perverse is not necessarily wrong. Perhaps it is now possible to ask whether the failure is neither Bron's nor *Triton*'s but is rooted in the very heterotopic fabric of the satellite's social structure. Despite paying homage to Delany's use of the term “heterotopia,” it still strikes me that critics of the novel have tended, by and large, to treat *Triton* as celebratory, as very much a utopia, even if one that demands less conformity and has more space for social variation. Freedman, for example, describes *Triton* as an outstanding example of a science-fictional utopia and even Moylan's thorough and insightful discussion tends to slip towards the laudatory. But perhaps the ambiguous heterotopia is itself a form of *destinerrance*; after all, it is heterotopias that “dessicate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences” (Foucault, qtd. in *Triton* 292). The very undecidability of the heterotopian is precisely what constitutes it as a form of *destinerrance*: it resides in the aporia between two languages, the language of utopia and the language of modernity, whether the modernity in question is that of twentieth-century Earth or twenty-second century Triton.

Bron believes that his destiny is to be himself (or herself), yet, as the one to whom binarism is a necessary ontological condition without which life is literally unthinkable, utterly without destination, his only way to be himself is to become not himself but what he wants or what he wants to want. Bron does not, in the end, suffer from indecision, but from a surfeit of decision; his/her confusion is a product of excessive ideological certainty. Thus Bron ends up caught in a paradox: “she had no way to show she knew, because any indication of knowledge denied the knowledge's existence in her” (263-64). Bron can neither have what he knows he wants nor become what she knows he wants her to be for him, save by admitting that there is no destination, that to journey somewhere is always to end up somewhere else; to be someone is always to become someone else. Even through Bron's marvelously Lacanian dream of recognition and misrecognition at the end of the novel, she is still incapable of the full realization that she and he (“her old self”) are as indistinguishable as *ou-topia* and *eu-topia*.

Rather, she frames undecidability as a morass to be avoided; yet in her confusion and distress she has a final moment of *destinerrance*, a certainty that the dawn will not come. Both metaphorically and metonymically, Bron's epistemological and ontological battle with certainty and uncertainty, with destination and a-destination, announces both utopia and heterotopia as *destinerrance*—the place (or, in the case of heterotopia, the places) that can only be arrived at by arriving somewhere else. And that somewhere else may well be, for some readers, neither utopia nor heterotopia, but “the place of reading” itself.

NOTES

1. Delany's comment that Bron is “hateful” because he invents fanciful rationales for other people's actions could certainly apply here, since statistics often provide the basis for fantasizing about other people's motivations.

2. Amusingly enough, Canada's most outspoken group of politically-reactionary women calls its members R.E.A.L. (Realistic, Equal, Active, for Life) Women (see their website at < <http://www.realwomenca.com/>>). They would not be the only people who embrace Bron's standards of womanliness.

3. I was struck, while thinking about *Triton*, by a comment made by Jonathan Goldberg in an article on Willa Cather's work. Goldberg says that, as an adolescent, he responded to Cather's “Tom Outland's Story” in *The Professor's House* (1925) with a sense of inchoate recognition:

I found the writing intense, atmospheric, heavy with something that was not said, which I nonetheless recognized. I couldn't tell what it was, aslant the calm surface of narration, that I heard. But whatever it was spoke to me precisely along the wavelengths of a silence that I found irresistible. As if somehow, the novels were written in a language which I could not articulate and yet in which I found myself articulated.... My reading was rapt. I can still recall a kind of fevered sense that overcame me.... [I] read the story as if it were some kind of science fiction. The place was unimaginable, I could not imagine it as being real. It was the place of reading. It was where I was. (465)

This quotation resonates with a point Ann Weinstone makes when she refers to science fiction as “a young person's first queer theory” (41). It is the very queer science-fictionality of *Triton* that provides this sense of finding the place where you are and, at the same time, of recognizing that place as located *inside* the textual.

4. Foucault cites Borges's fictional encyclopedia, with its fantastic taxonomy that proliferates categories aimlessly (e.g., “(a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) suckling pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs,” etc.), in the opening page of *The Order of Things* (qtd. xv).

5. Easterbrook deploys Deleuze and Guattari and their work on the rhizomatic processes of becoming only for his reading of *Triton*, but I think one could well apply it to certain understandings—particularly Bedap's but also, in the end, Shevek's—of Odo's philosophy in *The Dispossessed*.

6. Here I would include the readings by McEvoy, Fox (“Politics of Desire”), and, to some extent, Moylan.

7. It is almost impossible not to suggest, with a certain wistfulness, that the productive possibilities Foucault foresaw have almost entirely been diverted, if not actually cut off, by the new homonormativities of same-sex marriage and its ilk.

8. Delany himself makes a similar argument in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (1999), where he contends that cities need to be constructed and regulated in ways that allow a maximum, rather than a minimum, of consensual erotic contacts within a

community. He follows this argument by asserting that it is irresponsible, if not immoral, to expect a positive sexual relationship with a partner without having had sufficient variety of erotic experiences to learn one's own pleasures, needs, and possibilities.

9. Men who chew their thumbnails appear with some frequency in Delany's work: in *Stars in My Pocket*, this particularity is what makes Rat Korga the perfect image of Marq Dyeth's desire; similarly, in "Aversion/Perversion/Diversion" (1995), Delany tells the tale of his own encounter with a man whose sexual desires centered around men who wear sneakers, preferably blue ones. Yet the context of each of these tales, both the fictional and the non-fictional, speaks to the rhizomatic proliferation of desires, practices, and relationships, including the possibility of particularizing desire in entirely unforeseen ways without necessarily reducing it to a psychoanalytic fetish.

10. For analyses—and conceptual genealogies—of Derrida's *destinerrance*, see Leavey and Miller.

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ABSTRACT

Bron Helstrom, the protagonist of Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton* (1976), articulates an ideology of masculinity that is deeply at odds with his society and that his friend, Lawrence, labels a "logical perversion." Deploying Derrida's concept of *destinerrance* (the notion of arriving at the wrong place, or reaching the right place only by going wrong), this article argues that Delany's complex investigation of questions of gender, sexuality, and race in *Triton* exposes the extent to which such ideologies depend on irrational self-justification and outright duplicity. Bron is caught in the tensions among destiny, destination, and *destinerrance*; this, quite ironically, makes him in many ways the most utopian character in this ambiguously heterotopian world. Bron has a blueprint for a better society, even if that blueprint is rooted in a nostalgic fantasy of an antiquated realm of sexual hierarchy. However, because *Triton*'s heterotopian narrative and locale cannot be wholly dissociated from the concept of utopia, the novel also demonstrates that, since utopia is more of a critical concept than a realizable destination, contemporary utopics have no choice but to deal with their inherent *destinerrance*. Whether male or (after his chosen gender reassignment) female, Bron's only possible destination is nowhere at all.

Jes Battis

Delany's Queer Markets: *Nevèryon* and the Texture of Capital

This article addresses the various plays and performances of circulating capital within the NEVÈRYON SEQUENCE, Samuel Delany's longest and most ambitious work, aside from his much acclaimed novel *Dhalgren* (1975). Unlike *Dhalgren*, the tetralogy of NEVÈRYON books have received relatively little critical attention, despite the fact that they occupied Delany from roughly the end of the 1970s until the late 1980s, emerging as a kind of fantastic documentary of the development of the AIDS crisis in New York.¹ My goal here is to explore the collisions of capital and queer desire within Delany's series, looking particularly at how his characters situate themselves within a proto-capitalist market that seems to shift, almost liquidly, from antiquity to feudalism to primitive accumulation. These shifts, I argue, mirror the play of signification and desire among Delany's characters, who are able to read themselves queerly within (and against) the market-text of NEVÈRYON as a whole.

The sequence encompasses four books, which are themselves collections of events, or even effects, although at times they read like short stories: *Tales of Nevèryon* (1979), *Neveryóna* (1983), *Flight from Nevèryon* (1985), and *The Bridge of Lost Desire*, sometimes called *Return to Nevèryon* (1987). The words themselves, *Nevèryon* and *Neveryóna*, signify alternative graphical possibilities depending upon how they are read or written. *Nevèryon* could mean (n)every-one, or never-one, or everyone, or simply *never*, simultaneously. Citations of the novels often omit the diacritical marks that make *Nevèryon* and *Neveryóna* so special, even if the marks appear in the printed texts themselves. Given that several of the characters in the sequence are obsessed with tracing the evolution of writing, only to discover its imperialist origins, the power of language within all four books cannot be underestimated. Delany juxtaposes the grammar of capitalist production, as seen from multiple perspectives, against the difficult and sometimes impossible conjugation of fetishes and desires, in order to expose the embeddedness of the market within the motions of sexuality (and vice versa).

Jeffrey Allen Tucker's critical study of Delany's work, *A Sense of Wonder*, devotes a chapter to addressing various sign systems and linguistic plays within *Nevèryon*. Tucker insists that "the series' semiotic analysis of language, commodification, cultural practices, and, most significantly, the relations of domination on which slavery has been based, reveal such systems to be structured conventions as opposed to eternal truths of nature" (149). Tucker also briefly discusses BDSM and other sexual-minority cultures within the tetralogy; since his argument is concerned primarily with the relationship between sign systems and slavery narratives, however, he is not able to address specifically the multiple LGBT relationships that proliferate across all of these stories. Characters such as Gorgik, Small Sarg, Noyeed, Udrog, Raven, Pryn, Noreema, Myrgot, the Smuggler, Phelan, and even the metafictional "critic" of the series—"K. Leslie

Steiner," existing only in the appendix, who is an avatar of the author himself—all occupy unique and shifting terrains of desire, embodiment, and disclosure, and these systems overlap and even antagonize each other against the backdrop of a competitive market.

The four books in the sequence—taken as a single long volume, like Tolkien's *LORD OF THE RINGS* (1954-55)—have a wide cast of characters, including phantasmal readers and audiences that Delany himself imagines in eerily metafictional passages. Yet for the purposes of this discussion, I want to focus on three central actors within the NEVÈRYON universe: Gorgik, Pryn, and Pheron. Gorgik is the first character introduced, a barbarian (that is, a white-skinned, yellow-haired man, in Delany's world), who is born in the city of Kolhari only to be sold as a slave. After he is bought by an aristocrat named Myrgot, Gorgik embarks on a curious journey that does not really take him anywhere. Along the way, he meets Pryn, a slave girl who in turn is adopted by another aristocrat, Madame Keyne, and who becomes a kind of *supplement* (in the Derridean sense) to Gorgik's own journey—that is, she follows in his footsteps but also adapts and mirrors Gorgik's own experiences and mental processes. The two are involved in a kind of spatial dialogue, visiting the same places, talking to the same people, and exchanging the same artifacts, suggesting that they are really actors in the game of capital—a play of identity politics and reification that stretches across time and space.

By reification, I refer to Marx's commodity fetish, which convinces the social actor under capitalism to see all monetary exchanges as rigidly objectified, rather than apprehending them as human experiences, meetings between people that occur in overlapping social spheres. It is by this misrecognition, says Marx in *Capital*, that "man himself, viewed as the impersonation of labor-power, is a natural object, a thing, although a living conscious thing, and labor is the manifestation of this power residing in him" (135). Bodies, in this sense, produce purely fiduciary relations; financial transactions do not (or are not supposed to) produce human relationships. The Marxist commodity fetish, when viewed as a particular type of misrecognition among capitalist workers, can also be used as a framework to analyze the circulations of queer desire within a precapitalist society such as Nevèryon.

Kolhari sits uneasily as the capital of Nevèryon, where aristocrats and their slaves (always collared) mingle with proto-burgher and yeoman families such as Gorgik's—his father is a sailor and his mother "claimed eastern connections with one of the great families of fisherwomen in the Ulvayn islands" (*Nevèryona* 2). In Nevèryon (and, we assume, beyond), racial hierarchies have emerged that invert those of Europe prior to the Dark Ages, or which anticipate the ethnic diversity of a community such as twelfth-century Iberia. "Barbarians," the racially disenfranchised, are light-skinned and fair-haired (often slaves), while the ruling aristocracy is composed of people with dark skin. Gorgik himself shares something in common with the city of Kolhari—they both "function" as a result of organized slavery. Without the slave trade, Kolhari's whole system of commerce would implode. Madame Keyne (her name an echo of economist John Maynard Keynes) utilizes slave labor to construct her New Market, which will

pave over Kolhari's more informal—and erotically charged—Old Market, also the site of the Bridge of Lost Desire.

One of Gorgik's earliest memories involves stumbling into a room filled with slaves (who later vanish, leaving only their collars behind), and even as a child he makes the connection that bodies can be trafficked—humans can be transformed into commerce. This is a peculiar magic trick, a spell of capital wherein bodies enter an equation only to vanish. The collars left behind are ciphers, like the ingredients or "reagents" of a successfully cast spell, a hint of ash, a ring of shadow, that remains as the only vestigial link to the powers invoked. When Kolhari is conquered by the army of the Child Empress, Gorgik is sold into slavery, only to be unexpectedly liberated by the Vizerine Myrgot after she takes a sexual interest in him. Importantly, Delany's sequence begins with a connection across time among powerful women: Gorgik's mother (who "claimed connections" to an even more powerful family), the Child Empress who disenfranchises him, and the Vizerine who frees him (or admits him into a different and more specific kind of servitude, that of being an economic actor within Nevèryon itself).

Delany, in an interview, has stated that "it would be wrong to take *Nevèryon* as ... some radical limit work, an enterprise lucid with insight and ultimately authoritative, about S/M practices, in any of their forms, gay or straight" ("Sword & Sorcery" 141). It is through S/M sexuality, however, that Gorgik stages political interventions within the gendered order of his own world; S/M also becomes, for Gorgik, the most appropriately flexible pleasure practice, a relation that is both global and particular. In an interview given near the end of his life, Foucault states firmly that "the idea that bodily pleasure should always come from sexual pleasure as the root of *all* our possible pleasure—I think *that's* something quite wrong....[S/M suggests] that we can produce pleasure with very odd things, very strange parts of our bodies" (165; emphases in original). By sexualizing the collar, the signifier for slavery, and projecting it as a phallic extension of his own body, Gorgik tries to construct an erotic field in which "very strange parts," in effect his whole body, can produce pleasure. By creating pleasure, he also creates culture.

Gorgik, whose narrative stretches across all four books of the sequence, is contrasted in *Flight From Nevèryon* with Pheron, a more discreet and contained actor; Pheron lives and dies within a very specific narrative for Kolhari, the "tale of plagues," and yet he crosses paths with both Gorgik and Pryn, not necessarily speaking with them, but similarly walking in their footsteps, sharing a street corner, lingering on the edges of a room they might once have occupied. Delany is gesturing to the melancholic operations of Freud's uncanny, the relays between seemingly unconnected people and places (for which one might mourn, even having *never* met or visited them) that give us a sense of fatality. Simultaneously, with Pheron's character he shows that a person living with an AIDS-like virus ("before" AIDS) can construct a meaningful and powerful resistance against institutional structures in a world that tries to erase him. Cindy Patton, in *Globalizing AIDS*, points out that "the first 'activism' was conducted not by ACT UP, and not even by self-identifying people living with HIV. The first resistance

occurred before AIDS was even given a name" (xvii). There can still be resistance, even if an official language of activism has yet to be established—even in a medieval world with no calculus for describing what will eventually become a global illness. This echoes my point about queer spellings—the need to find plentiful and alternative graphic, spoken, and literary representations for mourning and loss, even as one acknowledges the debt that mourning pays to queerness and vice versa. The point also, Delany says, in one of his own intratextual comments on the *Tales*, is to “find a *better* metaphor” (187; emphasis in original). Pheron’s purpose is not to act as a metaphorical solution for AIDS representation, but simply to *act*, to live in the face of an uncaring public, to resist through his unwillingness to die.²

Pheron is a cloth-maker, a sly queer man with a camp sense of humor who delights in talking about the secret erotic exploits of carpenters, actors, and others who walk the “Bridge of Lost Desire” (in the Old Market of Kolhari) looking for sex. Pheron is a kind of “patient zero,” one of the first men to become infected within the confines of the city; and without any coherent support group he has to rely on his friends, Zadyuk and Nari, for informal hospice care.³ Delany describes Pheron himself as a *site* for lack, a type of absence within the narrative that he cannot quite reconcile:

There is something incomplete about Pheron. (Since there *is* no Pheron, since he exists only as words, their sounds and associated meanings, be certain of it: *I* have left it out.) My job is, then, in the course of this experiment, to find this incompleteness, to fill it in, to make him whole. (*Tales* 196; emphases in original)

But as Pheron’s illness progresses, it becomes clear that Delany’s point is not to “make him whole”; rather, he constructs him carefully as a gay man living in an unfamiliar context (the Middle Ages), whose encounters with anti-AIDS prejudice are nonetheless chillingly similar to those experienced by men and women during the 1980s crisis years.

Like the erotic market of Times Square (which Delany analyzed in his 1999 work *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*), the “Bridge of Lost Desire” is a fulcrum for queer sexuality within Kolhari, a chiasmatic site for linking different bodies, histories, and cultures. But as with the fabled city of *Neveryóna*, it is just as likely not to exist, or to exist merely in the segmented dreams of reader, writer, and character, the slim neuronal fragments, velveteen soft and more fragile than any of Pheron’s priceless fabrics, whose symbolic imprint makes the NEVERYON SEQUENCE gather and cohere as a twilight text, forever limned with the energy of confusion. The bridge, like Foucault’s concept of *heterotopia*, is a site of difference (a place for “putting” difference), as well as an articulation whose exile helps constitute a world of overriding sameness.

The cultural core of Neveryón, and the sign-system that encloses all things within its borders—including Gorgik, Noyeed, the city, the world—is the Market. Everything happens within the Old and New Markets of Kolhari, and they become the symbolic ground upon which all human interaction—financial and erotic, gay and straight—emerges. The New Market is empty, not yet built (“this one is going to be six *times* the size of that spread of junk and garbage over in the

Spur!” Madame Keyne promises [*Flight* 154; emphasis in original]), an in-process sign that nevertheless controls hundreds of laborers and merchants who are already subject to it, while the Old Market remains the nodal point for sexual and financial exchanges. Both slaves and sex-trade workers are sold within the Market, some selling themselves, some being sold by others, some lingering in a twilight realm of circulating capital, transacted flesh. Gorgik visits the Old Market to purchase Small Sarg, a slave whom he “liberates,” thereby beginning his own transformation into Gorgik the Liberator. The Liberator, in fact, liberates nothing and no one, which points to the peregrinations of lack and loss that Delany explores in the *Tales*, the practices by which we strive for liberation only to encounter an endless chain of lost chances.

Four women who make their lives within and across this market—Madame Keyne, Radiant Jade, Pryn, and Ini—are linked by an erotic signifying chain, a peculiar community. Madame Keyne is in love with Radiant Jade, and vice versa; Jade is also in love with Ini, who sometimes grants her sexual favors, but only through a kind of pathological disinterest. Pryn is fascinated by all three women, but, although she has had sexual experiences with women before, she does not appear to be physically interested in anyone at the moment. Madame Keyne plucks Pryn from a crowded Kolhari street because she finds the girl beautiful (Pryn often describes herself as being overweight), but in the end she has to send Pryn away for reasons both sexual and financial. This whole exchange, with all of its maddening twists and turns, takes place in a *locus amoenus*—a garden, within a manor, within a market—always threatening to spiral outward into a kind of sumptuous nonentity, or to collapse in on itself, like a shattered astrolabe or crumpled letter. Within the garden, there is also a miniature model of a garden (and a manor and a market), that Pryn first regards with delight, until she is later informed that such models are quite common.

The sexual relationships that traverse all four NEVERYON books are not easily classified, although they can be read as different notes within something vast and contrapuntal, fragments of a mirror that fit together only to produce a reflection—that is, an *imago* of desire, which is always on the lam, always being pursued even as it pursues something else. Of the two long-term relationships that emerge from all these circulating desires, one is drenched in power and servitude (Gorgik/Noyeed), and the other vibrates with commerce and control (Madame Keyne/Radiant Jade). Both occur within the logic of a capitalism that is, within Nevèryon, moving past the agrarian model and towards a pre-industrial one. Neither of these relationships can be classified strictly as gay or lesbian, nor are they supposed to be, especially if we follow the point that Delany makes throughout the series: desire operates within circulating patterns, emerging out of complex historical and political sites, and classifying it within normative categories is as ambivalent a project as writing itself. As Old Venn explains in *Tales of Nevèryon*, the act of writing first emerged as an effort to organize and classify the labor of slaves:

I did not invent this system. I only learned it—when I was in Nevèryon . . . and do you know what it was invented for, and still is largely used for there? The control of slaves. If you can write down a woman’s or a man’s name, you can write down

all sorts of things *next* to that name, about the amount of work that they do, the time it takes for them to do it. (62; emphasis in original)

Madame Keyne "adopts" Pryn in the same manner that Fagan adopts Oliver Twist: their relationship is pedagogical, yet firmly inscribed within a homoerotic context. The climax, in every sense, of Madame Keyne's teaching is a speech on commodity exchange, through which she imparts the fundamentals of pre-industrial capitalism to Pryn, who listens attentively (even if she is a bit confused). The lesson begins when Pryn, watching Madame Keyne toss an iron coin to a slave laborer, protests that she just gave away money. The older woman corrects her: "If you think I *lost* in that transaction, then you do not know what the enemy is, nor, I doubt, will you ever" (*Neveryóna* 136; emphasis in original). Then, despite what seems like a foregone conclusion, she attempts to illustrate the principle to Pryn (and, arguably, this was the very reason that she adopted the girl: to offer this explanation, which Pryn will then be able to offer to someone else, thereby creating a symbolic network). "Money that goes out," she explains, "comes back to me. And, you must admit, it costs very little. So now you have the whole system of enterprise ... [and] you know where most of the iron for these little moneys comes from, don't you? It's melted down from the old, no-longer-used collars" (134).

But this is only the concrete explanation, an insider's perspective on the capital exchange that has just taken place: money has gone out, but it will come back (through the coerced labor of the slave, always in surplus, and now increased, if ever so slightly, by the added incentive of the iron coin); and, in actual fact, the "money"—or the spell—is simply a radical transformation of the slave collar. Marx describes the surplus principle as "an alteration of value. [Labor-power] both reproduces the equivalent of its own value, and also produces an excess, a *surplus value*....[F]or the capitalists, [it] has all the charm of a creation out of nothing" (*Capital* 139, 146; emphasis in original). Capitalism creates value from nothing, *ex nihilo*, and this is the most powerful spell of all—the ability to exploit and order human labor within a field of perpetual motion. The proletarian underclass always has the capacity to do more work than would be compensated by a living wage, or by the expenditure (by the capitalist) needed simply to keep the laborer alive. So often, this exploitation of surplus value occurs through the oppression of migrant laborers, and Rey Chow describes it as the unjust "resolution" to a primary contradiction within historical capitalism: "A workforce that actively contributes labor toward the accumulation of capital yet at the same time receives the least of its rewards—namely, an ethnicized population—is the magic formula that resolves one of the basic contradictions of historical capitalism" (34).

Through this exploitative relationship (ethnic slavery), Madame Keyne is, therefore, getting something out of nothing, or something out of *nearly* nothing, which is capital's game. In order, however, to explain the outermost limits that define this play (which is also the "game" between Noyeed and Gorgik, a game of remembering and forgetting, a psychic as well as a financial transaction), Madame Keyne cites power itself as the mobility of all capital:

I have watched governments come and go, some led by liberators, some by despots, and I realize that the workers on this side of the fence and the out-of-work on that side—as well as the Liberator they oppose and support—share, all of them, one common *mesconnaissance*: they think the enemy is Nevèryon, and that Nevèryon *is* the system of privileges and powers such as mine that supports it.... [A]s long as they do not realize that the true enemy is what holds those places of privilege—and the ladders of power to them—in place, that at once anchors them on all sides, keeps the rungs clear, yet assures their bottoms will remain invisible from anywhere other than their tops, then my position in the system is, if not secure, at least always accessible. (*Neveryóna* 137; emphasis in original)

I cite this scene because it is erotic as well as pedagogical, and because Madame Keyne's desire (for Jade, for Pryn, for Kolhari itself) is wholly inseparable from her position as a key economic actor within the city. All three of these women become peculiar mutations of economic exchange principles, particularly Marx's statement in *Capital* that "the characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economic relations that exist between them" (51). Madame Keyne, Pryn, and Jade are quite literally *actors* within the play of capital, even as they are performers within the mummer's dance of Kolhari, drawing out the lines and stage directions of their own human relationships, the meetings and partings that their bodies endure on a daily basis. Marx specifies that "every commodity ... is only the material envelope of the human labor spent on it" (56), but Delany reverses this conclusion, making all of these characters the "material envelope" *for* the commodity, the living, enfleshed formula that demonstrates how capital is written on the body. Madame Keyne, like all of us, loves within the boundaries of an increasingly global capital, but she is also tormented daily with the recognition of this paradox, the awful inequality of loving in a world of signs—in a world where signs mean everything and you mean nothing—and so she tries to give Pryn a way out of this, even if such an egress is wholly impossible.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx struggles to define the circulation of capital as a kind of electromagnetic process, a series of competing impulses that can result in either crisis or equilibrium. Like eros, capital moves through necessary stages and can become "stuck" if it is not allowed to transform and evolve. "As long as it remains in the production process," Marx says, "it is not capable of circulating.... [A]s long as it remains in circulation, it is not capable of producing" (621). He plays with the words *fixed* and *fixated* when describing this kind of economic stall, suggesting both a freezing and a fetishization of capital itself. In this sense, the movement of capital takes on an incredibly sensual motility, becoming a propulsive fluid, like blood, that can harden, crystallize, and even evaporate if its vital circulation is interrupted. These ruptures produce crises of reification for capital, which in turn mirror the original reification of the commodity fetish.

What this means for Delany's characters is that capital, as a force that both defines and is defined by class relations, can have a powerful impact on the lives and loves of queer subjects. Just as often as it destroys and debilitates the worker's body, capital also violently and irreversibly opens up new markets and new spaces in its quest to remain in perpetual circulation. These markets require

the participation of minority communities in order to function, and as they emerge, so too does the financial power of those communities become legible and desired. Therefore, purchasing power becomes a culturally leveling force. This is what Kevin Floyd, in his work on queer Marxism, describes as a form of complicity: "Gay bars or gentrified gay ghettos, for example, are simultaneously opportunities for capital accumulation and indispensable shared communal spaces" (187). These opportunities, enacted in various ways, allow for the "creation of a thoroughly commodified gay and lesbian community" (186). Delany's characters, I argue, attempt to glimpse themselves within the various stages of capitalist development, often realizing that their queer desires are surprisingly compatible with the evolution of proto-capitalism.

Pryn, for instance, is forced to rethink the long-term relationship that Madame Keyne shares with Jade when, while stopping by an open window, she overhears a private conversation between the two. Coincidentally, this scene echoes David Harvey's argument that "Marx sees each relation as a separate 'window' from which we can look in upon the inner structures of capitalism....[W]hen we move to another window, we can see things that were formerly hidden from view" (2). It is while gazing through this window that Pryn realizes that Madame Keyne has an entirely different private persona, as well as an entirely different name—that is, her first name, Rylla, which she offers only to Jade, and which Pryn can simply overhear (but never obtain). "Do you remember, Rylla," Jade asks, "when you took me on that business trip to the south?" (*Neverýona* 162).

Rylla is pleased by the memory, even when she recalls how they shared a room next to a group of bandits ("I was so terrified!"), and, through a combination of fear and ingenuity, they had to devise a system of silent communication. "I took a waxed writing board," Rylla says, "and wrote you a note." We are not sure what the original message was (Rylla does not repeat it, and why should she, since Jade knows what was said?), but Jade excitedly repeats her own scrawled reply: "'I love you more than life and wealth, and they will never know it.' Or was it 'wealth and life?'—" To which Rylla (or is it Madame Keyne?) replies: "I think it was 'breath and wealth.' Or was it 'light and breath?'—No matter; it was the right matter for the time!....[M]y wonderful Jade! You used to be terrified of so many things back then. Slavers who were bandits; bandits who might be slavers—" (163). Like the money form itself, the signifier bandit/slaver is a mutually dependent cooperation, and the tipping point between bandit and slaver remains indecisive, a bare breath. Appearance depends as much on reality as reality depends upon appearance, as Marx asserts in the *Grundrisse*: "If a fake [pound] were to circulate in the place of a real one, it would render absolutely the same service in circulation as a whole as if it were genuine" (210). Money can be a form of drag, blending fake/real within the act of mimesis. Gayatri Spivak describes this process as "a functional *inadequation* (fake = real)" (115; emphasis in original).

Rylla's curious phrase, "no matter; it was the right matter," is a riddle that pertains to much of the *Tales* as a unified text. It is also a spell, a message sent over the blackened foundations of mourning: the I-love-you which, Barthes wryly observes in *A Lover's Discourse*, actually "has no usages. Like a child's word, it

enters into no social constraint.... [I]t is a socially irresponsible word" (148). The message is both a matter and no matter, a message and no message. Everything that exists between Jade and Madame Keyne, the enormous tension of two human beings in love, like two speeding trains running parallel but never colliding, is signed through no sign, scrawled into a palimpsest of wax that can later be scraped away. Like the hyper-communicativeness of the melancholiac who produces no meaning, the language of love—and perhaps, in Delany's terms, queer love especially—produces a dark superfluity of signs, a purloined letter.

In Delany's world of both queer and straight sex-trade workers, it seems almost miraculous that none of the primary characters—all of whom participate in the sex trade at one time or another—ever feel as if their lives are being threatened by a largely queer-phobic medieval world. Just before holding a carnival, the traditional "safety valve" for managing dangerous energy, the city of Kolhari offers an official announcement, a medical "explanation" of the plague that resembles the rhetoric of the Center for Disease Control in the 1980s:

There is danger in Kolhari of plague. To date there have been seventy-nine probable deaths—and of several hundred who have contracted it, no one has yet recovered. We advise care, caution, and cleanliness, and Her Majesty, whose reign is brave and beneficent, discourages the indiscriminate gathering of crowds. This is not an emergency! This is *not* an emergency! (*Return* 213; emphasis in original)

Underlying this very public health crisis, however, are the private and intensely personal crises of the queer people in Kolhari living with a plague whose symptoms resemble AIDS, though they have no rhetoric to describe it: Toplin's anger at being expelled from school, his curiosity regarding Pheron (who is older and seemingly more independent), and his resentment towards—yet exhausted acceptance of—his mother's ministrations, since he cannot care for himself. Similarly private is Pheron's lost relationship with his father, his mourning of the acceptance that his father could never whole-heartedly offer (or that he always mistranslated), and his careworn relationship with Nari and Zadyuk, the young, heterosexual couple who choose to care for him rather than having a child.

It is Nari, in fact, rather than Pheron or Toplin, who first mentions the ceremony that is going on parallel to the carnival. She identifies it correctly as a ritual of mourning, a peculiar spell being cast by a mixture of gay and straight men and women, just as radical and as organic as an ACT UP protest or an event thrown together by the Lesbian Avengers, Queer Nation, the Gay Men's Health Crisis—the wizards and the spellcasters whose *ars magica* defined queer activism from 1980 to 1995. "They say there's a tavern," Nari tells Zadyuk, and "under it, an old cellar's been dug out. Some ancient crypt, I think, that used to be used for ... well, I didn't really understand that part. But so many people are going. So many people are sick" (242). This ritual, held in a dark, poorly ventilated performance space—the very essence of the type of heterotopia that Judith Halberstam identifies as producing "strange temporalities"—is also an invocation, a naming: the naming of an old god, *Amnewor*.⁴ Delany claims to have drawn this word from a friend's dream (which, uncannily, parallels the events of the carnival itself), but lexically it resembles a great many ideas that are central to *Flight*:

"am" as "auto-immune," the war/"wor" against illness, as well as governmental inaction towards its effects, and finally, *Amnewor* itself as a queer spelling, a new name or position that could signal resistance rather than capitulation. It is a drag show, a spirit show, a séance, and a funeral all at once, a queer system of mourning that defies classification. Occurring as it does in a newly excavated cellar, above the remains of its unknown occupants, with an *ad hoc* erected throne to house the plague itself as a faceless monarch (240), the "Calling" becomes a study in both death and camp. This crystallizes William Watkins's observation that "we have made the sign 'death' a permanent citation and so a form of irony. Death has, somehow, along the way, become camp" (1).

Delany (or Delany's narrator) in *Flight* describes the NEVERYON books themselves as an archive, a connection across time between different formulations of affect, different lives and struggles, different ways of loving (and of dying), that are nonetheless linked because they occur along the same contours of power and signification. The characters have their own hopes, their own longings, but they are also stones in the Bridge of Lost Desire, letters in a complex alphabet. Jade herself is a precious stone, a keystone, just as "Rylla" is a partial anagram for "liar." In *Flight*, upon listing the current theories for the transmission of AIDS being discussed in the 1980s—"CMV, ASFV, HTLV, Hepatitis-B model, retroviruses, LAV, the multiple agent theory, the 'poppers' theory, the double virus theory, the genetic disposition theory"—Delany's narrator concludes that, in the end, the resistance to AIDS (and to the oppression of those living and dying with AIDS) must be a mnemonic as well as a political intervention: "No one will understand this period who does not gain some insight into these acronyms and retrieve some understanding of how they *must* obsess us today, as possible keys to life, the possibility of living humanely, and death" (218; emphasis in original). Those acronyms become the historical spells and spellings of AIDS discourse.

In this sense, the NEVERYON books hold a startling relevance for marginalized readers, however complex their personal relations to marginality might be. Delany's work does not simply address racial and sexual oppression; it maps out both of these realities on a fantastic cartographic surface—the city of Kolhari, the lives of its inhabitants, the *apeiron* of their psychic lives and entanglements—in order to see how both oppressions function within radically different contexts. These characters, although they might seem, at first, to be the tools of a deconstructionist, are no more implements than you or I, since their utility merely reflects the status of all actors within global capital, all humans living within a world whose signs are often cruel, misremembered, misread. Just as any object, when taken out of its productive context, can be fashioned into a weapon, these characters have very different lives and loves, depending upon who is reading them and how carefully the reading is measured. Rylla's guarded privacy, Gorgik's complex manipulation of the oppressive system that manacles him (even as it gives him subjectivity), Noyeed's bewildering fluctuation between mastery and submission, Pryn's playful experimentation with different sexual realities (even if she only wants to watch)—all of these positions might be taken up, understood, appreciated by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered readers.

The forgetting of the city of Neveryóna, its abandonment beneath the waves (and the gradual erasure of its cultural history by the citizens of Kolhari) mirrors the forgetting process of citizenship itself, which is always a reverse-mnemonic trick. In the case of Kolhari, the development of the city is constituted through the denial of the ruins beneath it, just as the ontology of Nevèryon as a melancholic nation emerges through the subjugation of its ethnic population (and “ethnic,” in the case of these books, means light-skinned), as well as through the creation of a proletarian underclass (who are often, like Pryn and Gorgik, visibly mixed-race). Like track lines, both sexual and ethnic sutures lie across the surface of Nevèryon, becoming the trade routes and migratory roads traveled by Gorgik and Pryn. Their melancholic task becomes one of remembrance as well as migration: to remember the dead city that lies beneath Kolhari, as well as the ethnicized deaths that constitute the emerging nation, those who have given their bodies and souls for the New Market.

NOTES

1. There has been some excellent critical work done on the series, though with a different focus than I take here: see Kelso for a solid discussion of narrative technique; Johnston for a consideration of links with Delany’s biography; Spencer for an analysis of the series’ deconstructive roots; and Freedman for a brilliant “anatomy” of Delany’s overall body of work and the position of the series in relation to it.

2. This strategy recalls Donald Moffett’s 1990 photo installation, “Call the White House, 1-(202)-456-1414, tell Bush we’re not all dead yet,” as a response to governmental apathy (see Crimp 18).

3. Shilts’s controversial history of the AIDS epidemic identifies a “patient zero” in one Gaetan Dugas, an airline steward who allegedly spread the disease via his travels.

4. Halberstam connects these “strange temporalities” (1) with participation in non-normative, artistic, and subcultural spaces that are both frequented and fashioned by gays and lesbians: “[U]rban queers tend to spend their leisure time and money on subcultural involvement: this may take the form of intense weekend clubbing, playing in small music bands, going to drag balls, participating in slam poetry events, or seeing performances of one kind or another in cramped or poorly ventilated spaces” (174).

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the connection between queerness and capital within Samuel R. Delany's NEVÈRYÖN SEQUENCE, looking particularly at the volumes *Nevèryöna* and *Return To Nevèryön*. By mobilizing Marxist concepts (such as the commodity fetish) within his depiction of a fantastic Iron Age economy, Delany deliberately "queers" Marx's notion of primitive accumulation. Tracing the connections Delany draws between lived queer sexuality and the interpellation of subjects within the capitalist market system, this essay examines how the series' LGBT characters are subjected by and through the circuits of global capital.

James Campbell

Kill the Bugger: *Ender's Game* and the Question of Heteronormativity

Here's a message: Every man in the city is with you. Kill the bugger!—Moises Kaufman (72)

Ender's Game is full of buggers. While Ender Wiggin, the protagonist of Orson Scott Card's 1985 novel, has no face-to-face encounter with the alien invaders apparently bent on colonizing humanity's solar system until very late in the book—in fact, only after he has utterly defeated them—the mental image of this insectoid enemy (colloquially called “buggers”) haunts Ender and his military schoolmates and motivates everything they do and everything that is done to them. Memories of a bugger invasion and fear of its recurrence prompt the authorities to draft Ender and mold him into the perfect tactical commander. And this fear of the absent Other eventually leads the powers that be to trick Ender into committing “xenocide,” the annihilation of an entire sentient alien species. At first lionized as the savior of humanity, Ender is later redefined as a pariah for his violent transgression. At the end of the novel he reinvents himself as the Speaker for the Dead and, through the temporal wonders of near-light-speed travel, spends the next several thousand years atoning for his crime.

Although primarily a British term, “bugger” as slang for either a male homosexual or the practice of sodomy is not entirely unknown in Card's native US. I will contend in this essay that *Ender's Game* is haunted by the image of these real-world buggers as much as by the fictional aliens that threaten Card's future humanity. Despite its lack of overt homosexual acts, the novel is thoroughly homosocial: the Battle School to which Ender is sent is, with only one apparent exception, an all-male establishment; and its pre-pubescent students perform their share of male bonding and identification through aggressive rival groupings. The novel's vision of childhood is unsentimental: Card's boys, often including Ender, are violent, competitive, libidinous creatures, not cherubic Hummel figures in space. In this essay I will focus on the sexual cross-currents that are critical in *Ender's Game*, specifically the construction of the libidinous child, the relationship between sexuality and procreation, and the role of sexual scapegoating in community formation. I will also consider the novel in the context of Card's larger oeuvre, including the ENDER SERIES and some of his other works. I will conclude by comparing *Ender's Game*, considered as a novel about sexuality, with Card's nonfiction writings as an anti-homosexual activist.

In what follows I am not proposing to discover a coherent message about homosexuality spread across Card's sf and nonfiction. Rather, I am considering how Card's public, political voice recurs in—and is complicated by—his sf texts. I seek not to resolve these voices but to demonstrate how the sf text ultimately provides a more nuanced, layered, and responsive vision of sexuality than the voice of the social commentator. Specifically, I read the ENDER SERIES as being at

odds, on matters of sexual identity and desire, with Card's public stance as a Mormon fundamentalist. From the latter perspective, sex is seen solely a means of procreation. Yet while Card's sf, especially the *ENDER SERIES*, is indeed concerned with procreation, perhaps to a greater extent than has been acknowledged, it also recognizes sexuality's tendency towards excess, both in the way libido predates the physical capacity for procreation (i.e., the phenomenon of pre-pubescent sexuality) and in the way that sexuality serves as a focal point in the formation of social identity, including areas far removed from parentage and the passing on of genes. Excess sexuality has a place in Card's sf, but not in his nonfiction interventions.

When examining Card's thirty-year career as a novelist, it is possible to perceive a gradual—and presumably consciously considered—decline in the representation of homosexual desire. One of the most striking aspects of Card's early sf is its explicit deployment of sexuality as a central thematic element. Emphasis on the importance, construction, and repression of sex, usually bound up in the characteristic sf trope of the precocious child destined for greatness, are the distinguishing features of Card's early sf. One of his earliest novels, *Songmaster* (1980), is a far-future tale centered on a young, conspicuously beautiful male protagonist, Ansset, a gifted singer who is given drugs to delay the onset of puberty. These drugs also inflict incapacitating pain at orgasm; as a result, singers like Ansset are trained in the arts of repression, called "Control" in the novel. Card posits connections between singing (symbolic of any artistic endeavor) and sexuality, since singing is necessarily joined to emotional attachment, communication, and love but is also a powerful and potentially dangerous force in need of constant policing. Moreover, Ansset discovers the debilitating painfulness of sex during an encounter with another man, Josif, one of the few characters Card directly identifies as a homosexual, who is eventually castrated by the government for what is generally considered the rape of Ansset. But both Ansset and the reader know differently: what occurred was consensual sex between men, misinterpreted as violence by a prejudiced society.¹

By the mid-1980s Card's sf is still vitally interested in sexuality, but the homoerotic has been sidetracked while heterosexuality is increasingly tied to procreation. *Wyrms*, the 1987 novel that followed *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead*, focuses on an adolescent female protagonist in an allegorical tale complete with Bunyanesque names: Patience, the heroine and daughter of Peace, must unite with Will to achieve her goals, while controlling the fleshly character Sken (skin). Meanwhile, Angel, at first an able assistant, falls from grace and betrays Patience. Throughout the novel, Patience responds to an overwhelming call to come to the Unwurm and either have sex with or kill him/it. As it turns out, she does both. Libido, however, is now presented solely in terms of fertility: "her lover waited to fill her womb with life" (115); "I am hungry to have his babies" (200); the Unwurm wants "to live, to pass on his genes to his children" (323). As in *Songmaster*, this is a novel in praise of repression, this time symbolized by diplomatic restraint and the importance of Will; significantly, what needs to be channeled is now heterosexuality, seen as procreative potential (though its

representation in the form of quasi-monstrous interspecies sex somewhat taints the normalizing force of the allegory).

Card's most recent fiction has largely sought either to de-emphasize excess sexuality or else assign it to obviously pathological characters. His 1992 non-sf novel *Lost Boys*, for instance, finds the specter of pedophilia haunting small-town America, but only the homosexual variety is linked to murder and dismemberment. Card's treatment of the theme of infantile sexuality, in fact, shows the changes in his fiction over time, moving from the consensual sex mistaken for abuse in *Songmaster*, to the disguised boarding-school buggery of *Ender's Game* (as I explore below), to the lethal predatory pedophilia of *Lost Boys*. In some ways Card's latest novel, *Empire* (2006), a near-future sf work (with a videogame tie-in), represents the logical result of this developmental pattern: despite the fact that it addresses a Red State/Blue State civil war, the divisive issue of homosexuality is not mentioned in the novel itself, appearing only as an issue in his nonfiction Afterword (342-43). Increasingly for Card, sexuality shifts from being a powerful, mutable force that must be aesthetically molded to an already settled issue best handled in a nonfiction forum; excess sexuality goes from controlled song to closeted sin. But Card's most popular sf, *Ender's Game* and its immediate sequels, coming as they do at the mid-point of this arc of resolution, offer a fascinating negotiation with the complexities of sexuality.

Published in 1985, *Ender's Game* falls between *Songmaster* and *Wyrms*, both chronologically and in terms of its construction and gendering of libido. But the first factor to be noted about *Ender's Game* is its immense popularity: the novel won the 1985 Nebula Award and the 1986 Hugo; its first sequel, *Speaker for the Dead* (1986), similarly won both awards the following year. *Ender's Game* has generated (so far) three direct sequels (*Speaker for the Dead*, *Xenocide* [1991], and *Children of the Mind* [1996]), as well as a parallel series of novels that retells parts of *Ender's Game* and then extends the earth-bound storyline (*Ender's Shadow* [1999], *Shadow of the Hegemon* [2001], *Shadow Puppets* [2002], and *Shadow of the Giant* [2005]). Card has announced two additional titles in the series, and *Ender's Game* has been optioned for filming, though it has been stuck in development for several years. As is typical with cult books that turn into franchises, fan reaction has become more restrained after the initial impact of the first two books; nonetheless, interest in the series is still high more than twenty years after the publication of *Ender's Game*.²

By contrast to the fan reaction, critical response has been varied. Not surprisingly for a novel that foregrounds its ethics, much criticism has focused on Ender's status as the moral center of the story. In 1987 Elaine Radford accused Card of presenting Ender as a fictionalized apologia for Hitler: since Ender and Hitler share certain biographical details, *Ender's Game*, she argues, represents an attempt to rethink fascism from the perspective of its perpetrator. This is ultimately a simplistic reading (and it is frankly difficult to determine just how seriously Radford herself takes it), but it does raise some suggestive questions about the novel's popularity if the critic is correct that "fascist ideals remain frighteningly alive in all of us" (11). Perhaps the most cogent critique of *Ender's*

Game is John Kessel's "Creating the Innocent Killer," which locates the novel's popular appeal and its ethical failings in the same core: its construction of an ethics of pure intention. For Kessel, Ender's status as an innocent who never intends to hurt yet nonetheless kills two people with his bare hands and slaughters an entire race of aliens offers readers "revenge without guilt" (94) and thus supports an essentially adolescent fantasy of violent reprisal toward those who have failed to recognize the subject's natural superiority and innate goodness. Kessel asserts that the novel presents not merely the ethics of an adolescent mind, but an ethics that is itself adolescent.

Strangely enough, the potential double entendre of Card's naming his aliens "buggers" has garnered only a few mentions. Thomas Disch, for instance, speculates that Card's monsters are called buggers "to make them doubly objectionable" (195), while Adam Roberts merely calls them "unfortunately named" (314). But as Norman Spinrad puts it, it is "difficult to believe that [Card] was unaware of the obvious sexual connotations when he named the aliens the 'Buggers'" (26).³ And as Kate Bonin argues in her investigation of the appearance and repression of overt homosexuality across Card's oeuvre, "One might easily indulge in a wink-wink/nudge-nudge reading of *Ender's Game* in quest of hidden gay subtext: Ender must save all mankind from the hideous buggers, who are ruled by giant, scary queens" (18). To a certain extent, this is what I propose to do; however, unlike Bonin, I am less interested in representations of overtly homosexual characters, characters who "really are" gay, than I am in the homosocial world of *Ender's Game* and its more subtle evocations of sexuality as a constant, barely contained presence in the lives of all the characters, especially the protagonist.

I should point out that by dwelling on homosocial/homosexual subtext I am not necessarily making any claims about Card's conscious intentions about the sexuality of his characters or the "true nature" of sexuality as represented in his fiction.⁴ Rather, I think what we have in *Ender's Game* is further evidence, if any is needed, for the claim articulated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men* that homosocial and homosexual desire exist on a continuum, and that the results of homosocial bonds may be either an acceptance or a homophobic rejection of expressions of physical homosexuality. Nonetheless, the homosocial is, for Sedgwick, a matter that cannot be divorced from sexuality even when it results in homophobia: "to draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted" (1-2). In the case of *Ender's Game* this sexual continuum is even more radically disrupted, and so less immediately visible, yet also more potentially unruly if its presence is detected, because the main characters are pre-pubescent children.

Child protagonists are one of the distinguishing features of Card's novels and one of the primary reasons for their popularity. Ender is recruited to the Battle School at the age of six and wins his final battle against the buggers before he is twelve. With the exception of the final chapter, then, the novel's protagonist is pre-pubescent, a child among other children. The question of Card's construction

of childhood is central to the novel, and I contend—contrary to other readings—that the kids of Ender’s world are anything but cherubic innocents.⁵ Childhood in *Ender’s Game* is stripped of sentimentality: it is violent, cruel, and deeply sexualized. While the depiction is not strictly Freudian, it owes a considerable debt to Freud in that Card’s children are polymorphously libidinal creatures, not Victorian innocents waiting to have sexuality descend upon them at the onset of puberty. Freud claimed that his discovery of the libidinous child made psychoanalysis itself possible.⁶ Card’s children, while hardly Freudian case studies, are likewise impossible without a concept of childhood that acknowledges pre-pubescent desire. Moreover, this steadfast refusal to sentimentalize the child may well represent one of the primary factors in the novel’s popularity. *Ender’s Game* takes kids’ lives seriously, and part of this seriousness lies in its treatment of their desires. As Card puts it in his Introduction to the 1991 “Author’s Definitive Edition” of the novel, “never in my entire childhood did I feel like a child.... I never felt that my emotions or desires were somehow less real than adult emotions and desires” (xx). The child characters of *Ender’s Game* are, to court paradox, not childlike. They are libidinal animals in a highly structured homosocial environment. Reading the novel for sexuality, then, is not merely a matter of discovering (or imposing) some wink-wink/nudge-nudge allegory on the text, but rather eliciting the patterns of desire that emanate from its characters as sexual agents.

Perhaps the best illustration of this idea is the character “Rose the Nose” and his gigantic, computer-assisted phallus. Rose is the commander of Rat Army, one of several units to which Ender is transferred during the military’s systematic program designed to torture him psychologically into greatness. Rose greets Ender with the requisite series of insults that form the lingua franca between these boys and then forbids him to use his computer desk. Throughout this introduction Rose is pictured as having “programmed his desk to display and animate a bigger-than-lifesize picture of male genitals, which wagged back and forth as Rose held the desk on his naked lap” (101). On the one hand, this is simple childishness, and Ender reacts to it as such: “How does a boy who spends his time like this win battles?” (101), he thinks to himself. But on the other hand, this scene makes more literal the homosocial relations through which the Battle School operates. Rose uses his desk both to create and to display his masculine power while denying Ender the use of his own tool. Rose’s phallic display reinforces the constant sexualized insults and bawdy jokes that serve to establish an order of dominance in the school. True to most unsentimentalized depictions of educational establishments, Card’s Battle School is a nasty, competitive, and alienating institution mediated through a discourse centering on images of the phallus and the anus.

Phallus and anus never come together in any literal way in Ender’s experience; rather, disguised references to them are modes of communication among the boys. Anal imagery especially forms a communicative trope, a stock image around which the boys weave variations on a theme. None of their expressions are overtly homosexual, but they certainly flirt with this possibility. Ender places himself, for instance, in his first grouping by manipulating the

computer desk the children use into sending out anonymous messages about his enemy Bernard's posterior. "COVER YOUR BUTT. BERNARD IS WATCHING," reads a message sent out over the name of God (50). Following a physical assault in the shower (not overtly sexual) by one of Bernard's cronies, Ender retaliates by sending out the message "I LOVE YOUR BUTT. LET ME KISS IT" over the name of Bernard (51). Naturally, this infuriates Bernard, who sees it as a challenge to his dominance in the launch group. And so it proves to be, as we are told that "Bernard's attempt to be ruler of the room was broken" (52). Ender (the name itself now seems less innocent) never directly accuses Bernard of homosexuality, but he implicitly grasps that the way to undercut Bernard's masculine authority is to accuse him of a taste for (tacitly male) ass. This is less a serious accusation than a successful attempt to use the computer desk as a form of phallic power to question Bernard's mastery over his own desk and thus his status as a potential leader. Ender knows how to control not only his own desk but all the other students' as well; if Bernard loses masculine status by this loss of control, Ender, at least in his own mind, gains at the boy's expense. But the implicit homophobia of the anonymous message testifies that this intensely homosocial environment demands constant policing through periodic accusations of homosexuality. The quickest way to undercut an enemy is to accuse him of homosexual desire while demonstrating his lack of power over his own computer desk. Rose the Nose and his electronic phallus literally display the meaning of this trope.

This violent homophobia coexists, sometimes peacefully and sometimes not, with scenes of great homoerotic tenderness.⁷ Ender's first friend at the Battle School, Alai, sends him off on his first assignment with a kiss (69). Alai also whispers "Salaam," which Ender correctly guesses to be evidence of "a suppressed religion" (69): "Ender guessed that the kiss and the word were somehow forbidden" (69). Most directly, this exchange constitutes a hint about the points of difference between the near-future world of *Ender's Game* and the world of its writing: in the story, Islam has become an underground religion. But there is another sense of the forbidden here: loving friendship between boys, relationships built on something other than competition and demonstrations of power, cannot be supported by the Battle School. A same-sex kiss, whether as a sign of friendship, a sign of sexual attraction, or a sign of peace (the meaning on which Alai eventually settles, only to reject it [171]), cannot be tolerated.

Ender not only experiences an intense homosocial bonding, he is also the recipient of one. Bean, the recruit whom Ender sees as a surrogate of his younger self, is heartbroken when Ender is transferred out of Battle School and into Command School years before his scheduled graduation. In a poignant few paragraphs, Card describes Bean's reaction to Ender's transfer. Significantly, Card has Ender receive the news just before lights out, so immediately after discovering his loss, Bean must undress in the dark and crawl into bed. He begins to sob, then turns to self-inflicted pain to control his agony. He finally falls asleep with his fingers in front of his mouth, "as if Bean couldn't decide whether to bite his nails or suck on his fingertips" (224). The image, that of a denied oral pleasure turned into a physical pain in order to counteract a psychological loss, neatly

parallels Bean's thought process. As he struggles with his bereavement, Bean first "tried to put a name on the feeling that put a lump in his throat and made him sob silently" (224); in the next paragraph he thinks (or perhaps the narrator thinks for him) that "once he named the feeling, he could control it" (224). This is ambiguous on two levels. First, it is unclear whether Bean has in fact named the feeling and so is able to sleep, as he does within the next few lines; or whether naming the feeling remains something that Bean defers to some future time, and sleep merely intervenes as a result of his physical and emotional exhaustion. The sentence can sustain either reading, and the first ambiguity is maintained by the second: if he does name the feeling, what is its name? Love, most obviously, but that of course opens up at least as many emotional possibilities as it delimits. And if love is the missing word here, why is it a love that dare not speak its name?⁸

The figure in whom both repressed homosexual desire and homophobic violence eventually converge is Bonzo Madrid, Ender's first commander. Upon first meeting Bonzo, portrayed as something of a Spanish aristocrat, Ender notes his physical attractiveness: "a boy stood there, tall and slender, with beautiful black eyes and slender hips that hinted at refinement. I would follow such beauty anywhere, said something inside Ender" (76). In the space of a few pages, however, Bonzo has lost a power struggle to the younger and smaller Ender, causing Bonzo to utter the ambiguous threat, "I'll have your ass someday" (88). And though Bonzo does not, in fact, get Ender's end, it isn't for lack of trying: just before Ender is transferred out of Battle School (the move that causes Bean such psychological trauma), Bonzo and a few of his goons attempt to attack Ender while he is naked in the shower (207-13). Ender appeals to Bonzo's sense of honor and gains a fair fight, which eventually results in Bonzo also stripping and confronting Ender in naked and wet one-on-one combat. Ender wins the fight by literally steaming things up: he pours hot water out of all the showers, using the steam and the soap on his body to grease himself and become impossible to grasp. He then attacks Bonzo and ends the battle by delivering a "hard and sure" (211) kick to his groin. Though Ender will not know until much later, he in fact kills Bonzo in the shower.

I have stressed the erotic undertones of the fight scene to make a point: violence and the specter of gay sex accompany one another throughout this encounter.⁹ In fact, were the characters in the novel a trifle older or the tone of the work a bit darker, readers might well suspect at the beginning of this scene, with its crew of older boys descending on a younger naked male in the shower, that they are about to witness not a beat-down but a gang rape. The subtext of incarceration is never far away in *Ender's Game*: after all, the story concerns a homosocial group of young men institutionalized by the state in a situation that straddles the border between the voluntary and the compulsory. These characters are borstal boys as much as they are soldiers. Prison showers are where impromptu power struggles and revenge acts take place in popular understandings of jail culture, and such acts have both a violent and a sexual component. Ender has just dropped the soap, and Bonzo takes his opportunity to demonstrate who is the man in this relationship. Or so he thinks before Ender delivers a symbolic castration and literal death. Then, having dispatched his enemy, Ender cries over

him (213). Card first introduces sexual tension and then diffuses it into violence, leaving the reader with the question of whether Bonzo needed to be killed for attacking the protagonist or for implicitly threatening to rape him. Not that I think any of the characters in Card's fictive Battle School anticipate a specifically sexual violence; although they are clearly not innocent cherubs, they also do not think along active, post-pubescent sexual lines. It is the reader who is left feeling disturbed over the sexual violence he or she senses lurking beneath the surface of the text. The *mise-en-scène* of the shower fight connotes rape, even if the characters never name it. Homosexuality is thus the great repressed in *Ender's Game*.

As I'll point out momentarily, the overt sexual themes of Card's Enderverse (to use the name for the series within fan culture) are largely focused on reproduction and only indirectly on erotic desire and expression. But I first want to investigate what may represent the biggest nudge and wink in the novel, the battleroom itself. Most activity in the Battle School revolves around the battleroom: children are organized into teams to compete in it, and commanders are judged by their performance and by the statistics generated there. Battle is a combination sport and war simulation, taking place in zero gravity, in which participants armed with non-lethal pistols shoot their opponents in order to freeze them in place. Both armies enter the battleroom through a corridor; the object of the game is to get at least five of your own men to the opposing army's doorway so that four of them can open the door and the one remaining can float through it into the corridor (90). Whether or not a reader chooses to assume authorial intention, it doesn't take an unusually perverse reader to detect a sexual underpinning: the armies struggle until the stronger team penetrates the opponent's corridor. Though not necessarily a sodomitic image, it bears repeating that (with the sole exception of Petra) these mock battles take place between all-male armies.

The erotics of the battleroom work further to undermine the idea that the students of Card's Battle School are free of libido. The battleroom, after all, is the primary focus of the school and the novel: classes are mentioned, but only battles are given play-by-play description. The battleroom is, at least in the eyes of the officers who run the School, "status, identity, purpose, name; all that makes these children who they are comes out of this game" (98). The battleroom is the playing field of Eton on which the war against the buggers will be won.¹⁰ Ender excels in the game: he revolutionizes both strategy and tactics and establishes himself as a great commander. His tactical innovation lies in using the freezing qualities of the pistol on himself and his teammates, freezing their legs to act as shields. In this way, Ender is able to use the pistol in a practical yet symbolic fashion: "holding his pistol at his crotch, he was firing between his legs" (105), freezing his enemies and then penetrating their corridors. The war against the buggers will be won through a symbolic form of buggery.

Though the battleroom represents the most extreme form of symbolic homosexuality in the novel, it is not the only one. After moving to Command School (located on a significantly named asteroid, Eros), Ender comes under the tutelage of the famous Mazer Rackham, the only human being to defeat a bugger

invasion. Mazer explains the pedagogical structure of the Command School in terms that replicate ancient Greek conceptions of pederasty: "In this school, it has always been the practice for a young student to be chosen by an older student. The two become companions, and the older boy teaches the younger one everything he knows" (264). Just previous to this, Mazer has defeated Ender in hand-to-hand combat by surprising Ender from behind as he bends over to pick up his computer desk: "he felt a hand jab roughly between his thighs and another hand grab his hair" (262). As with the attack by Bonzo, Mazer's assault is a symbolic, perhaps even a sublimated, rape, a violent attack narrated in sexually suggestive terms. After being forced to submit to Mazer, Ender will become his pupil and constant companion. But as Mazer is at pains to point out, he can teach Ender only because he has fought the buggers and won. In learning from Mazer, then, Ender will really be learning from the buggers.

Ender's formative experience is thus fraught with all the repressed and potentially violent sexuality of an Edwardian public-school novel. Yet there is more to a reading of sexuality here than a mere tracing of Ender's personal development. The fictive world in which Card houses Ender differs from our own primarily in terms of population and therefore sexuality. Ender's Earth is overpopulated, and a strong worldwide government enforces strict birth control. Ender himself is a "Third," an anomalous third child allowed to his parents by a special dispensation from the government only because of good genetic potential. Being a Third is no great mark of distinction in Ender's world: indeed, Ender is a pariah from birth because of it. Furthermore, Ender's parents are both apostate members of churches known for their opposition to birth control: his father is a former Roman Catholic and his mother a former Mormon (22). We are spared the details of how precisely the government has achieved it, but they have clearly established a reliable but not irreversible form of birth control, embraced a policy of zero population growth, and manipulated social ideology to the extent that most people consider having more than two children inherently criminal and disgusting. Though detail is lacking, we get no hint of artificial births or *Brave New World*-style decanting. Ender still comes from a nuclear heterosexual family. So long as humanity remains bound to earth, furthermore, the restrictions on heterosexual reproduction must remain intact. And what keeps humanity stuck on earth, despite immense technological leaps in interstellar travel, is the threat of the buggers.

Put simply, the buggers represent a limitation to heterosexual procreative freedom. So long as the buggers prevent humanity from colonizing other planets, humanity will be stuck with small families and embarrassed about its third children. Only when the threat of buggery has been removed can untrammelled heteronormativity return to the cosmos. The buggers are, to belabor the obvious, not heterosexual in the human sense. They reproduce much like ants or bees: one fertile queen populates an entire hive, while the majority of her children are infertile female workers and warriors. This is a war between different reproduction styles, and human heterosexuality emerges triumphant. By extrapolation, the elimination of the buggers will mean the return of untrammelled fecundity and the religions that celebrate it; we see this in *Speaker for the Dead*,

where a group of Portuguese Roman Catholics colonizes a new planet. "Normal" heterosexual procreation will be the driving force behind colonization, and colonization will be dependent upon Ender's triumph over the buggers and their inhuman fertility. Initially, Ender's military victory is a cause for celebration: his destruction of the home world of the buggers and its implicit consequences for human expansion are literally met with cheers and tears of joy. Having been tricked into destroying the buggers as a race because he had been told the battle was just another war game, Ender now becomes the savior of humanity and the key to its renewed expansion across the galaxies. He literally makes the universe safe for normative, procreative heterosexuality.

Ender's Game, then, would seem to be a text that evokes queer sexuality for the sake of rejecting it. It conjures images of homosexual attraction between pre-pubescent boys and, à la Freud, questions the essential innocence of the child prior to physical maturation. The novel initially rejects the homosexuality it suggests by tying it to a subtly sexualized violence. Then it uses Ender as the means to restore fertile heterosexuality and normative reproduction to its rightful place as the singular norm of the universe. It writes homosexuality, in other words, only to erase it and reinscribe heteronormativity as the unquestioned Good. Viewed in this way, it is an exercise in heterosexist triumphalism.

Such a reading, however, remains incomplete. *Ender's Game* contains two surprise endings. First and most dramatically, Ender thinks that his last battle is a game, and ironically he is trying to lose it when he wins. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Ender does not regard his victory as an unmitigated good. While the adults around him celebrate, Ender immediately experiences profound remorse. He sees what he has done as a crime; eventually, the rest of humanity catches up with him, and throughout *Speaker for the Dead* Ender's name is synonymous with evil: he is Ender the Xenocide. But Ender also becomes the Speaker for the Dead and seeks to atone for his crime. Additionally, he discovers the last remaining bugger larva and guards it carefully until he can find a suitable place to allow it to mature and restart the bugger race. Ender in this way becomes the reproductive savior of two races: he allows humanity to colonize new worlds and repeal the population control laws, and he fosters the remaining bugger queen until she can begin producing eggs and repopulating new planets. Ender is as much a sponsor of non-normative reproduction as of heteronormativity. As Speaker for the Dead, he carries the narrative burden of lost life as well, becoming a kind of space opera AIDS quilt.¹¹

Ender's Game is thus not as homophobic as it might initially appear, which makes it even more incompatible with Card's anti-homosexual nonfiction writing. But before moving on to an investigation of how the fiction and nonfiction interact, I want to take up the related question of how *Ender's Game* addresses the issue of scapegoating. Throughout the novel the buggers are presented as a convenient enemy, a generic bogeyman that can easily be substituted for any opponent, real or imagined. In the first chapter, Stilson, the class bully, taunts Ender by calling him a "bugger-lover" (6). In the second chapter Ender's brother Peter forces him to wear a bugger mask while they play a violent game of astronauts and buggers in which the astronauts always win. When he first arrives

at Battle School, an older boy asks Ender if he is the bugger of his group, meaning the pariah, the “kid that nobody takes to right away” (42). “Bugger” as an epithet is repeated throughout the novel; it is clear that it has become a general curse word, a term of abuse and scorn, an all-purpose putdown—the Enderverse’s equivalent of “fag.”

This general fear and loathing is politicized by the introduction, in the middle of the novel, of a conspiracy theory that foreshadows the story’s end, when we discover, after their all but complete destruction, that the buggers were never mindlessly aggressive, did not seek the destruction of humanity, and were not the drooling incarnations of evil that humanity has portrayed them as being. Dink, a member of Rose the Nose’s army, tells Ender that the buggers are not going to invade again. The “bugger menace” is a propaganda ploy of the powers that be in order to frighten the populace, “because as long as people are afraid of the buggers, the I.F. can stay in power, certain countries can keep their hegemony” (110). The enemy is necessary for social control, for the maintenance of things as they are. The buggers are a political scapegoat that allows the politically advantaged to retain power. Though the reader never discovers to what extent the political/military authorities knew about the buggers’ non-aggression, nowhere in the novel is this idea of the buggers as scapegoats contradicted. And whether the government knew it or not, we do discover that the “bugger menace,” as such, was a useful political myth.¹²

Moreover, as the adult officers patiently explain following Ender’s triumph/crime, it is Ender’s childlike empathy that has enabled him to defeat the buggers: “we had to have a commander with so much empathy that he would think like the buggers, ... but someone with that much compassion could never be the killer we needed” (298). Hence the necessity of tricking Ender with the game that turns out to be real. Ender can defeat the buggers because he feels for them; more than this, he loves them. Just before heading off to Eros and Command School, Ender makes this confession to his sister: “In the moment when I truly understand my enemy, understand him well enough to defeat him, then in that very moment I also love him” (238). Ender can defeat the buggers because he is precisely what Stilson the bully accused him of being: a bugger-lover. Rather than seeing the buggers as scapegoats, Ender sees them as fellow sentient beings.

The novel clearly understands that the easiest way to form a community is to make a public spectacle out of what must be excluded. Hatred for that which is abjected from the body politic is the clearest path to unity within the group and security for its leaders. Ender’s role as Speaker for the Dead potentially undermines this process of community formation by exclusion. By loving the enemy, even after s/he has supposedly been annihilated, Ender points out the deep connection that remains between the scapegoat and the community it is instrumental in forming. In effect, he is following the doctrine of his teacher and enemy, Mazer Rackham, who tells him “There is no teacher but the enemy.... Only the enemy shows you where you are weak. Only the enemy tells you where he is strong” (262-63). If the enemy tells you things about yourself that you can discover in no other way, is your only true teacher, and (for Ender at least) is best loved at the moment s/he is defeated, then the enemy is a lover. The rescued

queen, speaking telepathically to Ender, tells him that "we ask only this: that you remember us, not as enemies, but as tragic sisters.... If we had kissed, it would have been the miracle to make us human in each other's eyes. Instead we killed each other" (322).

To put this all together, what I am offering is a reading of *Ender's Game* that pays close attention to its deep homoerotic undertones. It is a story of libidinal children loving and hating each other in a competitive and potentially violent environment. It offers the scapegoating of the outcast as the easiest way to community, but it ultimately rejects such tactics in favor of a more subtle conception that stresses the dependence of the community on what it excludes. I do not think it too great a leap to consider the text as potentially, though latently, perhaps even allegorically, anti-homophobic.

It is intriguing to move from *Ender's Game* to Card's overtly anti-homosexual nonfiction, notably his 1990 article "The Hypocrites of Homosexuality" (first published in *Sunstone Magazine*, a publication for Mormons) and 2004's "Homosexual 'Marriage' and Civilization," a reaction to the Massachusetts Supreme Court's decision in favor of legal homosexual marriages (first published in *The Rhinoceros Times*, a North Carolina weekly newspaper). In both articles Card rejects social toleration of homosexuality on the basis of the putative damage it does to civil community. "The Hypocrites of Homosexuality" is written for a Mormon readership (Card is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), and its primary concern lies in the continued exclusion of active homosexuals from LDS membership. However, he moves effortlessly from pronouncements about LDS doctrine to application to US civil society: the danger of public tolerance for homosexuality, he argues,

applies also to the polity, the citizens at large. Laws against homosexual behavior should remain on the books, not to be indiscriminately enforced against anyone who happens to be caught violating them, but to be used when necessary to send a clear message that those who flagrantly violate society's regulation of sexual behavior cannot be permitted to remain as acceptable, equal citizens within that society. (par 12)

Clearly this is an argument for closeting: the community must be seen to have the power to police its constituents' lives and to deny those who opt out from participating as full and equal partners. Being seen to have that power is more important than actually wielding it, though it is clear that Card expects some people to serve time for their sexual choices. Civil society must, in Card's view, maintain a strict control of homosexuality, forcing gay people to act "discreetly, so as not to shake the confidence of the community in the polity's ability to provide the rules for safe, stable, dependable marriage and family relationships" (par. 13). Homosexuals can exist, but they must remain closeted. Not too closeted, perhaps—after all, one or two must occasionally be jailed to demonstrate the power of the state to protect heteronormativity. They must be hidden, but not quite invisible.

Immediately following the preceding quotation, Card generalizes about community formation:

Those who would be members of a community must sacrifice the satisfaction of some of their individual desires in order to maintain the existence of that community. They must, in other words, obey the rules that define what that community is. Those who are not willing or able to obey the rules should honestly admit the fact and withdraw from membership. (par 14)

Given the context of the quotation, it is difficult not to conclude that the community in question is the US rather than the LDS church. Card has been writing about “the polity” for the previous two paragraphs so that one wonders what precisely “withdrawing from membership” would mean in terms of US society. This is scapegoating: the buggers must be cast out of the community in order to define it; the community will cease to be meaningful if it fails to exclude someone. In terms of the LDS church, Card is clearly stating that failure to exclude practicing homosexuals will result in the destruction of the Mormon faith. But, unlike in *Ender’s Game*, Card does not go on to critique the scapegoating process, showing how the community is not merely defined by exclusion, but thrives upon it. Without the fictional buggers, the world hegemony of *Ender’s Game* cannot function. Without the real buggers, straight hegemony cannot function.

“Homosexual ‘Marriage’ and Civilization” is written for a secular newspaper and makes no appeal to the sanctity of any church. Rather, its argument is built on an essentialist notion of heterosexual marriage’s role in controlling reproductive strategies. According to this version of pop evolutionary psychology, marriage functions as a control to the natural tendency of human males to copulate with multiple partners. Interestingly, Card’s defense of this view often reads like a gloss on Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents*, for repression is the name of the game: “Civilization depends on people deliberately choosing *not* to do many things that feel good at the time, in order to accomplish more important, larger purposes” (par. 41; emphasis in original). One of these deferred pleasures, apparently, is homosexuality—which, as in his LDS article, is to be rushed back into the closet. Card even goes so far as to claim that homosexuals are not discriminated against in the US legal system because they can marry; they just have to marry someone of the opposite sex: “To get these civil rights, all homosexuals have to do is find someone of the opposite sex willing to join them in marriage” (par. 16). If we take Card at his word, he would seem greatly to prefer that homosexuals pretend heterosexuality, even to the point of reproducing children (par. 15). A vague Freudianism lurks also in his suggestion that homosexuality is a kind of phase that many people are able to grow out of (par. 87). But most centrally, Card’s argument against homosexuality in this article turns from religious to biological objections, creating a strange blend of James Dobson and Richard Dawkins.

To digress slightly, I think it is worthwhile to note that this entire article consists of begging the question. Card defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman for the biologically sanctioned purpose of procreation. This is “the fundamental meaning that marriage has always had, everywhere, until this generation” (par. 9). Never mind that throughout human history, various cultures

have organized procreation and primary kin relationships along different lines. Never mind that one need go no further than the Bible or the early history of the LDS church for examples. Card wants to argue for the biological necessity of a kinship structure that he assumes at the beginning of his argument. As an sf writer, one might expect Card to be open to alternative social organizations; after all, both the buggers and the piggies (from the latter three Ender novels) have radically different reproduction schemes from the human norm. Interestingly, soon after the publication of "The Hypocrites of Homosexuality," Card published the first novel of his Homecoming series, *The Memory of Earth* (1992), an sf retelling of the early chapters of the First Book of Nephi (from *The Book of Mormon*) in which Old-Testament-era Hebrew kinship is radically revised into a series of legally binding but temporary marriages that produce complex family structures of half-siblings and where two-parent nuclear households are unknown. In Card's nonfiction, by contrast, modern Western practice is presented as the perfect realization of universal biological imperatives.

In Card's view, the problem with homosexuality is its exclusion from what he calls "the reproductive cycle of life" ("Homosexual 'Marriage,'" par. 96). A society's failure to provide a clear social example of what a real family looks like will make it less likely that young people will commit themselves to sexual reproduction. Card mentions the psychological necessity of separate male and female role models for children, and (in another quasi-Freudian moment) we are told that adults tend to marry people "just like" their opposite sex parent (par. 25). But the importance of heteronormativity remains less in psychology than in biology. Neither artificial insemination nor adoption is so much as mentioned. Being non-reproductive, homosexual marriage is thus parodic: it imitates the form of actual marriage without reaching to the reproductive core of it.

Just as in *Ender's Game*, in short, the buggers must be pushed back into the closet, symbolically if not literally eliminated. Yet in the novel this elimination is seen as a crime. *Ender's Game* does take up the question of genetic destiny, but it does not content itself with an ethics of pure rejection. When Mazer Rackham explains to Ender how the bugger hive mentality works (and, incidentally, also explains that Eros is a place built by buggers), he claims that "murder's no big deal to them. Only queen-killing, really, is murder, because only queen-killing closes off a genetic path" (270). As in Card's nonfiction, genetic potential is here synonymous with real life. The real definition of murder is not so much the destruction of sentient life as the destruction of procreative potential. With the exception of queens, killing buggers (either non-procreative aliens or non-procreative humans) is no big deal.

Again, the Ender novels do not blindly accept this ideology. Ender himself never physically procreates throughout the more than 1600 pages of the ENDER QUARTET. But he does become the adoptive father of a human family and, in the final book, asexually creates two human bodies based on his memories of his brother and sister. He eventually comes to acknowledge these creatures as children of his mind—hence the title of the final volume. Ender remains outside the cycle of life, perhaps adding another level to the meanings of his name: he is a genetic dead end. Yet he is also the conscience of humanity, the Speaker for the

Dead who forces humankind to confront and acknowledge the mistakes of its past and learn from them. And he, as well as the alien species he encounters and mediates for, finds alternative, non-sexual ways to reproduce. The point is driven home at the culmination of the fourth novel: "And though there was no child with Ender's name as father on its birth certificate, he had become a father here" (*Children* 353).

A fascination with genetic potential haunts the entire quartet. In *Speaker for the Dead*, for instance, Ender congratulates his sister on her marriage by exclaiming "The Wiggin genes were crying out for continuation" (77). The narrative voice in *Xenocide* makes such blanket statements as "evolution encourages only creatures who are serious about protecting their own genes" (107), while Valentine is given a speech that closely parallels Card's theories of male and female reproductive strategies (417-19). And *Children of the Mind* presents some reductive views of marriage that see it merely as a conduit for procreation: Valentine asserts that "children are more to a woman than any man can be.... We stay with our men for the children's sake" (193). Ender's wife, Novinha, is even more blunt: "You keep the marriage alive for your children, and then when they're grown up you stay married for everybody else's children, so they grow up in a world where marriages are permanent" (231-32). This might seem like cynicism, but it is the same argument that Card will use in "Homosexual 'Marriage' and Civilization": marriage is for procreation and for the enforcement of heteronormativity through example.¹³ And yet, through all of this, Ender himself remains as a counter-argument, the childless father of children of the mind, the non-procreative creator. His children, like those of the beloved young man of Shakespeare's sonnets, are "nurs'd, deliver'd from [his] brain"—precisely the process that Oscar Wilde made the cornerstone of his theory of homosexual creativity.¹⁴

Perhaps the best encapsulation of this struggle occurs in *Xenocide*, when Ender and Valentine visit the bugger queen as she is busy repopulating her species. It is a scene of horror and disgust as the characters confront the violence and utter alienness of bugger sex. Ender articulates his emotional ambivalence in a way that resonates beyond the confines of the fictive world with its unreal buggers, perhaps into our world with its real ones: "I love her and I fear her. Because I'm not sure whether I should help her or try to destroy her" (175). Meanwhile, Valentine concludes that, despite her fear and distaste, "I must simply do my best to overcome the prejudices of my childhood" (176). In the novels, Ender does help the queen and assists in the restoration of the buggers as a species; they in turn help to rescue the humans on Lusitania from attack by fellow humans. Ender and Valentine do overcome the prejudices of their shared childhood, when buggers were defined as a monstrous enemy for the convenience of the ruling class and were all but destroyed through a dishonest manipulation of Ender's considerable skills and sincere beliefs.

Card's fiction provides a more nuanced and tolerant response to homosexuality than his more direct social commentary. Where his nonfiction revels in rejection and scapegoating, his sf takes a further step toward questioning the cost of rejecting the sexual/reproductive Other and calling attention to the

political dishonesty involved in using exclusion as a basis for community formation. And though it is easy and perhaps worthwhile to bemoan what strikes many as a reactionary stance from a celebrated imaginative writer, I think it is also useful to consider the opposite angle: sf allows people, both writers and readers, to say things they would never articulate without the mask of genre. It may require some interpretative work to read the mask, for which the reader must be prepared to take responsibility, but the things discovered are often far more remarkable than what is said *in propria persona*. This is, I think, in part at least what the genre of sf is for.

NOTES

1. Like many works of far-future sf, *Songmaster* replicates aspects of the time of its writing: the attitudes toward homosexuality voiced by the majority of the characters (i.e., those who do not know Josif well) are reflections of early Reagan-era intolerance.

2. The original seed for the first novel was a short story entitled "Ender's Game" that appeared in the August 1977 issue of *Analog* magazine.

3. Card was certainly aware of the implications of the name, since he uses the term as a verb in the pre-*Ender Songmaster* (278) and again in *Wyrms* (148). In *Ender's Shadow*, the Buggers (now capitalized) are recast as the Formics because, as a minor character claims, "Buggers is a bad word in English" (33). This does not prevent most of the characters from referring to the aliens as "Buggers" throughout the novel.

4. As Alexander Doty puts it, "the queerness of most mass-culture texts is less an essential, waiting-to-be-discovered property than the result of acts of production or reception" (xi).

5. Spinrad claims that Card's children are "desexualized adolescents" (24), while Steffen Hantke writes that the children are "un-gendered": "before the onset of puberty, *Ender's Game* suggests, there is no sexuality, no sexual desire, that marks the body as gendered" (503). Hantke claims that this is due to "the cultural imperative that children are non-sexual" (503), a cultural imperative that I believe Card's novel, if not Card himself, questions. Card's featuring of pre-pubescent soldiers is also what separates *Ender's Game* from the tradition of homoerotic bonding in military sf, most famously exemplified by Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959).

6. See Freud's *Three Essays*, especially the opening of the second essay, "Infantile Sexuality": "One feature of the popular view of the sexual instinct is that it is absent in childhood and only awakens in the period of life described as puberty. This, however, is not merely a simple error but one that has grave consequences, for it is mainly to this idea that we owe our present ignorance of the fundamental conditions of sexual life" (39).

7. The early relationship of the young woman Qing-jao and her "secret maid" Wang-mu is portrayed in *Xenocide* with tenderness and an undertone of hidden desire. Like most of the non-familial same-sex relationships in the *ENDER* novels, however, this one soon turns sour. I am not suggesting that these fictional characters "really are" lesbians, but rather that their relationship, based as it is on a radical discontinuity between its public and private facets, replicates a homosexual relationship in a homophobic society.

8. When rewritten for *Ender's Shadow*, this scene loses much of its erotic charge and, to my mind at least, much of its effect as well. The darkness and Bean's nakedness are missing. The feeling, however, remains noticeably mentioned but unnamed: "He understood what the feeling was.... Now that he knew what the feeling was, he could control it" (357).

9. Bonin makes a similar point in her article but focuses only on overtly gay characters.

10. In its use of the tropes of the schoolboy novel, *Ender's Game* presages the success of the Harry Potter novels.

11. The Descolada virus, a central element in the last three ENDER novels, does not strictly parallel HIV, but it is possibly relevant that Card uses a virus as an important plot device during the mid-1980s, as public awareness of the AIDS crisis gradually increased.

12. This conspiracy theory is not mentioned in Card's re-writing of the story in *Ender's Shadow*.

13. An interesting comparison here is with the argument in Leslie Fiedler's celebrated *Love and Death in the American Novel* (see especially Chapter 11, 337-90). Fiedler identifies as a central thread in American literature the evocation of homoerotic male bonds as an attempted escape from the traps of maturity symbolized in the heterosexual marriage plot inherited from Europe. Given the vision of marriage as the social enforcement of heterosexuality that we find in both Card's fiction and nonfiction, Fiedler's thesis seems relevant. Card reinscribes it, without alternatives in his nonfiction but with alternatives in his sf.

14. See Wilde's story/literary essay "The Portrait of Mr. W.H.," especially the expanded version that remained unpublished during Wilde's lifetime. The Shakespeare quotation is from Sonnet 77.

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ABSTRACT

This essay offers a reading of Orson Scott Card's 1985 novel *Ender's Game* in terms of its treatment of homosexuality. After reviewing Card's handling of the topic in his earlier works of sf, where it was presented more explicitly, the essay shows how *Ender's Game* continues to engage the issue in disguised ways: through its naming of the alien enemy "buggers" to its anti-sentimental construction of childhood eroticism to the subtly sexualized violence to which protagonist Ender Wiggin is subjected. Finally, it compares the higher tolerance for sexual difference in Card's sf with his more condemnatory statements as a commentator on contemporary cultural/sexual politics.

REVIEW-ESSAYS

Sherryl Vint

Views from Queer

Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction. Ed. Wendy Pearson, Veronica Hollinger, and Joan Gordon. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2008. xii + 285 pp. \$85 hb.

In a guest column first published in *PMLA* in 1995, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner attempt to answer the question “What does queer theory tell us about X?” and they caution against a conflation of queer theory with gay and lesbian studies. Queer, they argue, must remain open as a critical practice aimed at creating “publics that can afford sex and intimacy in sustained, unchastening ways; publics that can comprehend their own differences of privilege and struggle; publics whose abstract spaces can also be lived in, remembered, hoped for” (416). Sexuality, they remind us, is “related not just to family, romance, or friendship but also to the public world governing both policy and everyday life” (418). Queer theory opens any discursive or material practice up to new insight and modes of inquiry, to renewed understandings of our selves, our worlds, our passions, and our preoccupations. *Queer Universes* begins from a similarly broad understanding of what is signified by queer, and it effectively shows us that queer theory has indeed much to teach us about science fiction.

The book is divided into four sections: “Queering the Scene,” which provides a theoretical framework that is evident in many contributions; “Un/Doing History,” whose readings focus both on specific sf texts and also on larger tendencies within the genre, provoking us to see sf history in new ways once questions of sexuality take center stage; “Disordering Desires,” a group of essays that provocatively conceptualizes the discourse of sf in new ways; and “Embodying New Worlds,” a section that expands our understanding of sexuality and queer reading to encompass the utopian impulse of sf more broadly. *Queer Universes*—as the plural hints—embraces a wide variety of critical perspectives and examples, and ably demonstrates that matters of sexuality have always been at the core of sf’s interest in imagining otherwise, while at the same time rectifying a critical tendency to understate the genre’s libidinal side. The collection includes scholarly essays, more personal reflections by sf writers, close readings, and theoretical position pieces. The sum is an essential collection that challenges our understanding of a genre we thought we knew.

Wendy Pearson’s Pioneer-Award-winning essay, “Alien Cryptographies: The View from Queer,” which was first published in 1999, is reprinted here and in many ways anchors the collection. In this groundbreaking essay, Pearson links the projects of queer and sf studies, contending that “Queer, with its denaturalization of master narratives and its movement towards subcultural and subaltern understandings of texts, operates, by analogy, on some of the same levels as sf” (18). Pearson’s essay makes three important interventions through her reading of John W. Campbell’s “Who Goes There?” (1938) as a text that foregrounds the

contemporary panic about the potential passing of queer people among straights and of Tom Reamy's "Under the Hollywood Sign" (1975) as one that explores the consequences of a willful blindness to homosexual identity. First, she calls attention to the centrality of heteronormativity in producing a subject recognized as human, thereby compelling the recognition that sf's engagement with alterity has always already been deeply shaped by assumptions about sexuality and gender. Next, she makes the crucial point that queer reading is "less about content ... than about worldview" (34), thereby establishing affinities between sf and queer theory as novel ways of thinking about the world and subjectivity. Finally, Pearson concludes, the generic features of sf make it "possible—although obviously not inevitable—for sf to tell alternative stories ... of both sexual ontologies and the systems that sustain and create them" (35). In certain ways, the remaining essays in the collection can be understood as critical responses to this implicit call to chart and evaluate the ways in which sf has told such alternative stories, as well as the ways in which it has failed to do so.

Pearson's new contribution to this volume, "Toward a Queer Genealogy of SF," extends the idea of sexuality as "a lens through which to refract the potential to be recognized as human, the capacity for a livable life, and the possibility of asserting agency and subjectivity" (73). By using the idea of genealogy to expand what we traditionally consider sf—moving from Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) to Geoff Ryman's *The Child Garden* (1989) and finally to John Greyson's fantastical film critiquing AIDS moral panic, *Zero Patience* (1993)—Pearson challenges sf criticism to "enter into dialogues not only with each other but with contemporary epistemological and ethical approaches to questions of identity, subjectivity, history, and science" (99). Her reading of Le Guin's problematic novel is particularly fruitful, allowing us to understand Genly's misrecognition of the Gethenians as part of "the question of normativity and the problem of recognition" (76) that operates along axes of sexual orientation as well as gender. The presumption of heterosexuality, Pearson reveals, shapes this and other narratives of asexual or hermaphroditic being in ways that reinforce rather than challenge gender norms.

Certain contributions stand out, and I will focus on them in this review. Rob Latham's "Sextrapolation in New Wave Science Fiction" usefully contextualizes the prudish tenor of Golden Age sf within the tight editorial policing of a time when a few magazine editors controlled access to print, and reminds us that the New Wave's taboo-breaking sexual representations did not arise in a vacuum but were instead the culmination of a long struggle. Latham notes three responses of the genre to the more permissive context: feminist critique of normative gender roles and sexual relationships; a proliferation of various forms of sf pornography; and sextrapolation—that is, "projecting future trends based on current sexual mores or inventing novel sexual practices and relationships" (68).

The first of these responses might seem more pertinent to a book about gender than one about sexuality, but, as Veronica Hollinger's insightful "'Something Like a Fiction': Speculative Intersections of Sexuality and Technology" makes clear, sex and gender are inextricably intertwined via what Judith Butler has called the heterosexual matrix through which bodies, genders, and desires are

mapped onto culturally intelligible subject positions requiring particular alignments of sex, gender, and sexuality. Hollinger exposes sf's own role in policing and reproducing this heterosexual matrix via shifting representations of the conflation of sexuality and technology. She begins with Lester del Rey's "Helen O'Loy" (1938), a story in which "sex, gender, and sexual desire are represented as naturally aligned in the interests of normative heterosexuality; technology's function is simply to support and replicate the natural order of things" (145). Hollinger reveals sf's complicity at times in reproducing heteronormativity, first exploring Cordwainer Smith's "Scanners Live in Vain" (1948), where "identity returns to the (masculine) self through the self's reunification with the natural/sexual body and its renewed capacity to penetrate an appropriately feminine body" (146) and then C.L. Moore's "No Woman Born" (1944), whose anxiety about Deirdre's status as a "real" woman is rooted in a conception that "'Real' women are (hetero)sexually available to 'real' men; since Deirdre is no longer a sexually available body, the text worries obsessively about her status as 'woman' and, by extension, her status as 'human'" (147). As Latham argues, the genre "is always treating sexual topics, perhaps most powerfully when it seems to be primly avoiding them" (53). Yet Hollinger's essay concludes on a more optimistic note, examining texts by Samuel R. Delany and Joanna Russ that focus on the plasticity of human desire and provide examples of sf that can help us find a way out of what Judith Butler in *Undoing Gender* (2004) calls "this circle whereby heterosexuality institutes monolithic culture and monolithic culture reinstitutes and renaturalizes heterosexuality" (qtd 150).

Perhaps more surprising, the second strategy identified by Latham—sf pornography—also proves politically enabling in contributions to this volume, most significantly in Patricia Melzer's "'And How Many Souls Do You Have?': Technologies of Perverse Desire and Queer Sex in Science Fiction Erotica." Melzer usefully reminds us that sf erotica is not exhausted by its function of producing pleasure in the reader, but additionally contains what she calls an "aesthetic excess produced at the margins of their sexual encounters" and which she demonstrates contains "comments on, and models for, new subjectivities" (162). Melzer makes visible some of the critical and utopian energies fuelling these erotic fantasies, but she also warns us not to dismiss the pleasure; this fact of pleasure, she insists, "is central to queer theory, which addresses the navigations of bodies and desires in relation to subjectivity" (161). Melzer's corrective is a welcome reminder that a serious consideration of sexuality and sf not only returns notions of embodiment and affect to our critical engagement with sf, but it also requires the recognition that our own embodied and sexual being is part of our engagement with these texts. Melzer's analysis resonates with Pearson's observation that "as readers, we become different through the act of reading, of opening ourselves to the flow of possibilities, of new ideas, of new bodies" (73). The sf erotica Melzer examines rejects the aim of "creating the illusion of a natural body with natural desires" and instead "embrace[s] the multidimensional manifestations of bodies and sexualities" (168), using the conjunctions of technology and sexuality to find some ways out of the endless reproduction of the same problems that Hollinger critiques.

In an interview with Nancy Johnston entitled “Happy That It’s Here,” Nalo Hopkinson similarly draws connections between the material ways people live their lives, including their sexual lives, and the potential for sf to tell alternative stories, observing, “It sometimes seems to me—and perhaps whimsically so—that the people who are courageously non-normative in their sexualities are doing in the real world some of the work that speculative fiction can do in the world of the imagination, that is, exploring a wider range of possibilities for living” (203). Latham’s third strategy, sextrapolation, is pertinent here: sf can both make visible the damage done by current, limited ways of conceiving of sexuality and subjectivity and also provide a space for other potential assemblages of sex and the other. Hopkinson concludes the interview by echoing a critique found frequently throughout this collection that sf “still [has] a long way to go to practice [valuing diversity],” while at the same time stressing that it is a literature she values because it “probably helped to save my life” (215).

This insight returns us to the statement by Berlant and Warner with which I opened this review: their contention that sexuality is equally of concern in matters of policy and everyday life and in matters of romance and affect. The two final essays in *Queer Universes* develop this notion most overtly and challenge us to recognize that bringing together queer theory and sf requires us to re-examine all aspects of the genre, not merely its depictions of sexuality and gender. Helen Merrick’s “Queering Nature: Close Encounters with the Alien in Ecofeminist Science Fiction” opens with the assertion that “just as our constructions of sexuality (and the strictures of normative heterosexism) infuse every aspect of our culture/s, so too do sexualized assumptions underpin our constructions of ‘nature’” (216). Queering nature, in her argument, involves questioning which truths have been allowed to pass unchallenged in our representations of nature. Such questioning enhances our constructions of both “nature” and “culture” in solidarity with the editors’ assertion in the introduction that queer theory is about “imagining a future that opens out, rather than forecloses, possibilities for becoming real, for mattering in the world” (5). Merrick reads ecofeminist sf by Amy Thompson and Octavia Butler through the lens of Donna Haraway’s recent work on kinship, detaching kinship from biological notions of sex and reproduction, emphasizing the role of self-conscious agency in producing cross-species kinship. She finds in this approach a “highly appropriate aid for re-reading and potentially destabilizing the heteronormative surface of ecofeminist stories of alien-human encounters” (229).

De Witt Douglas Kilgore’s thought-provoking “Queering the Coming Race? A Utopian Historical Imperative” obliges us to see the centrality of questions of sexuality to sf’s most familiar scenarios. Examining coming race narratives, Kilgore asserts that “the task of imagining a queer futurity ... requires that we confront closely held generic assumptions about human nature and destiny” (233). Noting that “Whatever the physical or mental enhancements of the new races they invent, most sf narratives are organized around a heteronormative whiteness that limits thought experiments on species that truly differ from us or social relations that diverge radically from our own” (236), he compares the “homespun” (239) conclusion of Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) with the more radical

vision of humans becoming Martian in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy (1993-97). The humans who are named the new Martians at the end of Bradbury's work are "familiar: patriarchal, heterosexual, middle-class, and white" (240), whereas Robinson imagines "the denaturalization of the nuclear family as regulator of sex and race on Mars" (241). Like Merrick, Kilgore sees queer possibility in figuring kinship beyond the heterosexual, reproductive family. Robinson's new Martians force us to question "what we mean by a human future" (248): they see humans from Earth, products of a different regime of regulating sexuality and a distinct physical environment, as atavistic monsters constrained by limited bodies and sex/gender identities. Thinking and living queerly, Kilgore suggests, means transforming not only our sexual practices but also our sense of what it means to be a subject, to be part of a community, to inhabit our bodies, and to create networks of kinship beyond the heteronormative dyad

Queer Universes is a timely, smart, and innovative collection. In their introduction, the editors quote Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's statement in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) that "an understanding of virtually any aspect of Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition" (qtd 3). This vital collection ensures that our conception of sf is fuller and healthier.

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Roger Luckhurst

The Productive Convergence of SF Criticism and Critical Theory

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2008. xi + 317 pp. \$35 hc.

This book has been a long time coming. For those who have read Csicsery-Ronay's incisive essays, reviews, and commentaries in *Science Fiction Studies* and elsewhere for twenty years, this book has been a really long time coming. And, you know, I need to take at least some of the blame for that. I sent my first piece to *SFS* in 1991 when I was still a blissfully ignorant grad student. Instead of a clip round the ear, as you might reasonably expect, Istvan, one of the new generation of editors, opened a dialogue about an essay that got steadily better with each draft. The time taken over my rookie prose improved my understanding, not just of sf or critical theory or postmodernism, but also of the academic profession as a sphere of argument, negotiation, and collaboration. Multiply this engagement with however many contributors over the years and one can soon grasp where the time went: helping to shape a generation of scholars in the sf discipline.

Was it worth the wait? The great news is that you can stop struggling with Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), that odd, frustrating, and symptomatically obscure tome. Throw it over your shoulder. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction* is instead the apotheosis of that influential strand of criticism that examines the convergence of broadly postmodern critical theory with sf. Jameson fluffs his lines, in part because he reads so little in the genre and his critical frameworks have become so inflexible, his prose so tortured by unstated agendas and rigid political demands for art. In place of this murky rhetorical performance, Csicsery-Ronay lucidly reveals the rich and diverse analytic potential of this mode for understanding sf within contemporary technoscientific culture. The book overflows with insights, striking readings, provocative stances, productive ambiguities, and eminently quotable phrases, almost to the extent of losing coherence. The introduction warns early on that the book is "not intended to be a systematic exposition of a theory of sf" (9), that instead it is a "constellation" or "map of suggestions" (10). *Seven Beauties* strains the formal structure of the monograph, reading like a palimpsest of ideas that have been tried out and refined in the essays and reviews produced across the last two decades. The finished product, one suspects, is merely a snapshot that froze a matrix of thought at a certain moment; the kaleidoscope could easily have produced a different pattern. In an era of monographs relentlessly pursuing the single thesis, this overflow of multiple approaches and ideas is to be embraced, even whilst some of its limits are acknowledged. Yet what the book offers is a vindication of the productive convergence of sf criticism and critical theory, once thought so controversial.

The bracing challenge of the book begins with the title. Beauty is not a term associated with sf; indeed, beauty as a normative category of taste in aesthetics is more likely to be defined against the lowly pleasures of popular or mass-cultural forms. To promise seven beauties of the genre is therefore provoking. There is also a Kantian joke here (and those are pretty rare). The taxonomy of seven beauties contains two chapters on the sublime and grotesque, categories that are defined by their very transgression of the decorum of the beautiful. It suggests that there has been a conscious structuring principle not only to invoke a taxonomic ambition to delineate an expanded aesthetic of sf but also to explode or undermine that ambition. The title is in fact borrowed from a twelfth-century mystical Persian poem, an episodic exploration of seven cosmic principles played out in seven different spaces. This echo hints at a core argument of the book: that accounts of sf relying solely on its cognitive, rational, or analytic virtues will need to think about supplementing this approach by attention to the affective and even religious elements that sf can provide its readerships. In this book, beauty does a lot of work.

The introduction is a resounding statement of the central cultural relevance of sf in what is called "This Moment." For Csicsery-Ronay, sf provides the narrative and iconographic templates best suited to grasping the "daily transformations" of technoscience. More, *This Moment* is typified by a bleeding of the science-fictional into the world that has, since the 1960s, reached the end of nature and risen to a new order of technological saturation that he calls "artificial immanence." The object in question is less sf than "science fictionality," "neither a belief nor a model, but rather a mood or attitude, a way of entertaining incongruous experiences" in fully technologized environments (3). Csicsery-Ronay's contention that sf is less a genre than a "mode of apprehension" has been central to his work at least since his essay "The SF of Theory" in 1991. In our technologically saturated world, the cultural value of sf is that it navigates between providing the language to articulate "the current global hegemony of science" and the ability to operate as a form of refusal, play with possible future scenarios, or critique. It is "a ludic framework, a wide-ranging culture of game and play, in which that hegemony is entertained, absorbed, and resisted" (10). Sf is a "complex hesitation" (4) then, which means that its cultural work cannot be explained with a single thesis or the routine critical business of sorting progressive from reactionary forms. Things are immensely more subtle than this. The introduction offers a strong defense of the genre, although it ties this relevance almost entirely to contemporary (post-1960) culture, risking a kind of presentism. Perhaps more oddly, the book that follows does not seem especially interested in science-fictionality as such, sf in an expanded definition, but instead presents a narrower concern to map out an aesthetic centered on avowedly canonical literary works of sf. The prospect of expanding into gaming or virtual worlds and their new narratives, or of comparative work with national traditions beyond the Anglo-American, is raised as an urgent project only to be reluctantly shelved at the very end of the introduction. What follows takes the rather traditional shape of an aesthetic taxonomy for literary sf, albeit of a theoretically turbocharged kind.

Seven beauties in seven densely argued chapters. The first, "Fictive Neology," explores how sf creates the reality-effect for its imagined futures through initially disorienting neologisms or the coining of new "technolects." This is a disarmingly formalist start, beginning at the level of the linguistics of the science-fictional sentence. The book states its intention to rebuild things from the ground up. Csicsery-Ronay touches base with the central literary experiments in neology (Orwell's Newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1949], Burgess's invented future-slang in *Clockwork Orange* [1962], Hoban's post-apocalyptic language in *Riddley Walker* [1980], and so on) and discusses the expected instances where new words articulate new concepts that challenge ideological constructs embedded in grammatical usage (the famous instance of the transitional gender state "kemmer" in Le Guin's *Left Hand of Darkness* [1969]). These capsule readings are always smart and always laced with pleasingly eccentric illustrative material: the Martian language invented by the medium Hélène Smith in the 1890s that so confounded the psychologist Theodore Flournoy; a commentary on the invention of Klingon for *Star Trek* by the academic expert in Amerindian languages, Mark Okrand. There is a very loose historical framework, suggesting that early sf used only limited neologisms, employing conventional language, the frequency of neologisms increasing as technological innovation, linguistic conventions, and the megatext of generic futures expanded. As often happens in the book, an apotheosis of sorts is reached in the 1980s, when rapid technological innovation and transformation of everyday life result in a convergence of fictional and scientific neology, sf writers and scientific experts entering into a frenetic mutual exchange of languages for the barely just invented. William Gibson's "technolyricism" exemplifies the "feverish linguistic atmosphere" (26) of this moment, uneasily intertwining with a countercultural critique, a figuration of the technosphere influentially adopted by computer industries. Gibson is the touchstone in this argument as he is elsewhere, although there is surprisingly little sustained treatment of the cyberpunk trilogy. Csicsery-Ronay's earlier important essays on *Neuromancer* (1984) and *Count Zero* (1986), for instance, are not integrated into the architecture of the book; the arguments presented there about Gibson's apparent commitment to "modernist nostalgics" only surface fleetingly along the way.

After the formalism of neology, the second beauty, "Fictive Novums," constitutes the major conceptual engagement with Darko Suvin's definition of sf as a literature of cognitive estrangement through the introduction of fictional novums. This is a kind of Oedipal struggle with *SFS*'s founding father and with the particular neo-Hegelian Marxist critical mode that dominated the first two decades of *SFS* criticism. On the one hand, Csicsery-Ronay is clearly indebted to Suvin's crucial insight that the novum can help define the cultural and critical specificity of sf. (One might also describe the theoretical stance of the book as residually Marxist.) On the other hand, this chapter offers a brilliant counter-reading of the novum that identifies everything that limits Suvin's elaboration of the concept. As Csicsery-Ronay observes, Suvin borrows the novum from Ernst Bloch's pre-war Marxist theory, as that which is "unexpectedly new, which pushes humanity out of its present toward the not yet realized" (47). The

imagination of the future, or even of a different present in popular detective fictions, for instance, was for Bloch a resource of hope. Like Walter Benjamin's, Bloch's work on utopia and hope was saturated with Jewish messianic and mystical elements. These aspects Suvin ruthlessly suppresses, insisting that the novum always be strictly cognitive, meaning rational and scientific, but also, crucially, that it belong to a strict Marxist program of critique. What begins as a descriptive term becomes a prescriptive and punitive concept that condemns the majority of sf for its various transgressions into the fantastic and the uncanny, since the only acceptable route for the imagination is to instantiate the lessons of materialist rationality. Suvin's writings resemble Medieval taxonomies of heresies, obsessively described, the prospective punishments for transgression deliciously detailed. Csicsery-Ronay is typically more generous than this, refusing to limit imaginative possibilities. He defines the novum as "a device that creates a playful vertigo of free possibility in response to radical imaginary changes in readers' consensus physical and ethical worlds" (57). The trajectory cannot be pre-determined: the possibilities include fully elaborated rational critiques, but also gothic horrors and fantastic transformations irrecoverable to critique.

This means that Csicsery-Ronay can have intelligent things to say about the glorious irrational lunacies of "sci-fi" entertainments without having to use the language of condemnation. He has elsewhere offered a superb set of reflections on the cognitive *and* affective enablements of fantasy against the dismissals voiced by Suvin and such Suvinian Marxists as Carl Freedman, attitudes disappointingly parroted by Fredric Jameson in *Archaeologies*. I constantly cite Csicsery-Ronay's argument against this "cognitive" rationale for dismissal: "The value of much fantastic fiction may be in the respect it pays to the enormous paradox of living history that cannot be expressed as history, but only as myth or the repudiation of rational explanation" ("Lucid Dreams" 295). In book form, the focus is kept rigorously on sf. Here, Csicsery-Ronay notes the limits of a Suvinian theory unable to deal with complex, "multinovum" sf, such as Philip K Dick's work from the 1960s, where the novels can offer a "chaotic interplay ... in which the only comprehensive novum is the indeterminate and volatile relationship among several autonomous novums" (70). These proliferating novums in Dick or contemporary fiction by Paul McAuley or China Miéville tend towards the phantasmagoric rather than a critique that simply mirrors one's own cherished political project. Implicitly again, the complexity of contemporary sf outstrips concepts built for an earlier age of generic development (single novum "thought experiments" being typical of the pre-1960 short story that dominated the magazine form, Csicsery-Ronay suggests). The insights in this chapter offer a convincing reinvigoration of the concept of the novum, stripped of Suvin's limited conceptualization.

Another surprise within this aesthetic taxonomy is how often Csicsery-Ronay employs formal schemata to organize his chapters. The third beauty, "Future History," is essentially a schema of narrative forms for unfolding futures in genre sf. There is a great pedagogical clarity to this chapter, which explores why imagined futures possess less weight than historical or realist fictions until modernity begins to accelerate in the late nineteenth century. He offers a crisply

articulated justification for reading a genre that addresses the shock of perpetual revolution alongside cultural forms more interested in trying to find narrative salves for this wounding speed. *Sf* emerges out of such territory: "Modernity is conditioned by this overdetermined dialectic in which historical continuity is fractured by new kinds of knowledge and technique, which then make possible the reconstruction of civilization in a secular, future time" (81). Csicsery-Ronay then suggests a three-fold schema for narrative formulations of future history: revolution, evolution, and dispersive futures. Revolution ruptures the future from the past with clean breaks and firewalls, envisioning new orders typical of the utopia. Evolution provides the great nineteenth-century gradualist meta-narrative that can unite natural, social, and technological development under an allegedly indifferent cosmic principle. Progressive perfectibility motors some of the great ideologues of evolution, from Julian Huxley's synthesis of Darwin and Mendel to Ray Kurzweil's posthuman ecstasies and also some of the central grand future visions of *sf*. The impish H.G. Wells, at least in the 1890s, undercuts this vision with ambiguous narratives of devolution and decline. Dispersive futures are those that refuse unitary or linear future trajectories and imply multiple, chaotic trajectories. These reflect less confidence in meta-narratives (echoing Jean-François Lyotard's famous incredulity towards Marxian or Hegelian models of a single trajectory for the future), the fracturing and niche marketing of post-Fordist capitalism, or the non-linear, plural relativism introduced into the study of culture by post-Victorian anthropology. Complexity again favors *sf* from the post-1945 era, and particularly work since the 1960s. Csicsery-Ronay suggests in a familiar argument that genre *sf* reaches a certain point of self-consciousness from which it then can knowingly, and often ironically, use "the archive of obsolete futures" (98). This owes much to Jameson's postmodern reflections on history, now reduced in his view to a set of styles available only for pastiche or ironic recirculation. Within this framework, the chapter ends with a couple of really useful mini-essays on "Alternative Histories" and "Retrofutures," models of incisive reflection on striking trends within the genre that are symptoms of a condition of temporal disadjustment.

The fourth beauty, "Imaginary Science," returns to more thematic and conceptual engagements. The central contention is that whilst science is *sf*'s pretext, it is fatal to the playfulness of fiction to demand that *sf* conform to the protocols of scientific proof (or even, more loosely, scientific method). The educative potential of *sf*'s scientific rigor has long been a defense of the genre, variously argued by Verne, Wells, Gernsback, Campbell, Heinlein, and others. It remains lurking in Suvin's insistence on "cognitive" critique, too, and Csicsery-Ronay has some sharp things to say about such "extratextual demands" in Suvinian *sf* criticism. Scientific rigor is a weak and ultimately self-abnegating defense for a cultural form, since no imaginative fiction could ever survive strict adherence to these protocols. Rather than dismiss it out of hand, however, Csicsery-Ronay argues that "science fiction is an oxymoron that names a productive tension" in which the fiction riffs on scientific ideas and speculations, yet always in "a ludic mode to affirm the freedom of the artistic imagination" (112). It therefore takes its parameters from technoscience (this is why it retains

its association with geeks and nerds), but engages in games of consent and transgression with accepted scientific and technical knowledge. More than this, sf can be a cultural place that processes emergent newness, providing narrative shapes and ethical inquiries for potentially shocking or transformative breakthroughs. Thus, in another eminently quotable formulation, sf “engages the worldview of scientific materialism and supplements it with quasi-mythic narrative to make models relevant to cultures on the ground” (116). Some of the most productive conceptual work in this chapter derives from Tatiana Chernyshova’s wonderful *SFS* essay “Science Fiction and Myth Creation in our Age” (2004)—indeed, there are substantial chunks of citation generously inserted into the middle portion of the chapter. This work allows sf to be theorized as a form of “free myth” or as a prosthetic machinery, giving narrative or iconic body to proleptic scientific and technological speculations. By the era of cyberspace and nanotechnology, Csicsery-Ronay argues, the feedback loops between science and fiction make the borders between them sometimes difficult to determine. William Gibson maps out a mythic terrain of cowboys and frontiersmen that an industry then geekishly rushes to occupy; nanotechnologists write brochures for prospective investors and government funding bodies that read like a Greg Bear novel.

Towards the end of this chapter, Csicsery-Ronay observes that Enlightenment and Romantic philosophy was thoroughly intertwined with scientific developments. Progressive specialization and professionalization in science (and cultural study) have meant the separation of current critical theory from science. He reads the French poststructuralists as engaged in writing an ironic counter-discourse, working to subvert the dominance of technoscience in the contemporary world. Their post-philosophy seeks that which exceeds positivist quantification of the world (Derrida’s supplement, Deleuze’s de-territorialized energies, Lyotard’s “inhuman,” etc.). Their discourse resists the scientific demands for empirical proof or zero-degree linguistic transparency. Csicsery-Ronay has typically read different critical theorists as writing forms of science fiction (it began with Baudrillard and Haraway, and has since swept up texts like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* [2000]). To see these as “powerful examples of meta-science fictional *détournement*” (144) is a brilliant inversion. It means that sf is not to be legitimized by being processed through the latest critical theory fad, but rather that critical theory is read as a symptom, alongside sf, of a technoscientific world. Yet, although absorbed and fascinated by science, Csicsery-Ronay does still share some of that post-Marxist/structuralist animosity towards science that bears the traces of “two cultures” hostility, something perhaps fueled by the “Science Wars” of the 1990s. In this chapter, it is self-evident that value accrues to the liberties of the imagination: it escapes “the constraints of deterministic and oppressively systematic ideas” associated with science (112). The very last pages of the book refer to “the technoscientific empire” and “the domination of technoscience” (265). Systematic ideas can be pretty useful, as the taxonomic elements of this book demonstrate: they need not be always deterministic or oppressive. And I would hesitate to suggest that there is a singular “technoscientific empire” or that within it there is some unified

ideology. Even the dark conspiracy of the military-industrial complex imagined by Thomas Pynchon in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) was more plural, complex, and riven than this. Missing here is any engagement with science studies, perhaps particularly the work of Bruno Latour, who has done much to wrestle the messy activity of sciences (plural, lower-case practices) from the Science (the singular, capitalized monolith) as remorselessly promoted by head-banging ideologues like Richard Dawkins. Csicsery-Ronay has certainly got beyond the uniform condemnation of the institutions and practices of science typified by Marxist critics such as Stanley Aronowitz, but there are still traces of this suspicion. Perhaps it is the subsequent generation of critics who carry less baggage: a good place to start on this new work might be Sherryl Vint's introduction to science studies in the new *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (2009).

The fifth and sixth beauties, the Sublime and the Grotesque, are paired studies that do important work in trying to articulate the affective pleasures of sf that have been so overlooked during the dominance of cognitive models of criticism. The two concepts are configured in inverse relation. The sublime is a response to the shock of a sudden expansion, the encounter with the overwhelmingly vast or new that prompts a crisis of cognitive grasp but which (in Kantian theory at least) is ultimately introjected and mastered. The grotesque is a result of the shock that familiar objects are transforming or spilling over conventional categories, a transgression that prompts a horror or revulsion usually managed by projection outwards or abjection (Julia Kristeva's term for the revolted expulsion that is nevertheless constitutive of the subject). The sublime is typical of the science-fictional "sense of wonder." The grotesque is typical of Gothic horror, but is now often attached to the transgressive conflation of human, animal, and machine in the hybrid zone of Gothic sf. Once more, Csicsery-Ronay organizes the chapters as a taxonomy. A capsule reading of *Frankenstein* (1818) suggests how the reader is shuttled between the sublime and grotesque over the body of the scientific monster, beginning an ambivalence that resonates throughout modernity. Whilst carefully delineating how sf needs to be understood as something tied to technological developments after Kant—using David Nye's theory of the American technological sublime to track how sublimity migrates from natural to technological worlds—Csicsery-Ronay does use Kant's categories of the mathematical sublime to read Kubrick's *2001* (1968) and the dynamical sublime to read *The Matrix* (1999). (The switch to sf cinema comes with only the passing suggestion that visual culture is a stronger vehicle for registering the affective modes now subject to analysis.) The second chapter breaks genuine new ground in using Geoffrey Harpham's definition of the grotesque to navigate around the convergence of genres viciously segregated in the Suvinian paradigm. The grotesque thus accounts for category disturbances from Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), via cyborgs, to the fusions suggested by the ALIEN quartet of films (1979-1997).

After these densely theorized chapters the seventh beauty, called "The Technologiade" (a coinage on the model of the "Robinsonade"), is, weirdly enough, the most formalist chapter of all. The genre of the technologiade is defined as "the epic of the struggle surrounding the transformation of the cosmos

into a technological regime" (217). This is divided into the expansive space opera and the intensive "techno-Robinsonade," which retools the modern adventure tale, the bourgeois epic of world-construction, on a cosmic scale. What happens then is a surprise: Csicsery-Ronay dusts off narrative morphology, of the kind practiced by Vladimir Propp on the Russian folk-tale, and offers his own "drastically simplified abstraction" of the technologiade through a schemata of character types (the handy man, the fertile corpse, the willing slave, the shadow mage, etc.). This is the sort of abstracted model typical of basic grammars of genre proposed by critics such as John Clute or Farah Mendlesohn. These models can be incredibly enabling but always feel at least semi-arbitrary, generating all kinds of problems and anomalies that are actually products of their own structural method. Such a formal/structural approach seems rather rudimentary after the sophistication of the previous chapters. Placed last (where it might have been positioned earlier, perhaps after Neology), it tends only to reinforce the sense that the book is a patchwork of registers and approaches, stuffed with more insights than a dozen other books on sf, but whose trajectories are sometimes difficult to puzzle out.

The conclusion confronts how the book has consistently suggested that theories of the Singularity exemplify Csicsery-Ronay's argument but that no sustained reading of singularity and post-singularity fiction has been offered in the *Seven Beauties*. A four-page conclusion cannot hope to do that either: entitled "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," it is generous and open to future developments. This unconcluding conclusion also articulated for me my greatest worry about an otherwise very brilliant book. The defense of the genre mounted here is one that intrinsically ties its value to being the privileged artistic form that can address the bewildering, technologically-mediated experience of advanced Western modernity. It is anxious to claim that sf is at the cutting edge of contemporaneity: the introduction, after all, is called "Science Fiction and This Moment." Yet presentism is a dangerous thing: as soon as one writes "this moment" it is already past, already "that moment." The lack of space given to singularity fiction, that trend of works written in the wake of Vernor Vinge's famous essay on the technological singularity in 1993, means that this critical book is already not quite coincident with the contemporary genre. The hero of *Seven Beauties* is undoubtedly William Gibson: *Neuromancer* commonly returns as a kind of apotheosis in nearly every chapter. Needless to say, whilst *Neuromancer* was received as bringing sf into the center of cultural theory, it is now twenty-five years old and represents only one element of a complex and multiform field. Gibson's ambivalent relation to genre has only intensified; like Ballard before him, he can appear to exemplify a field that, arguably, he never really entered. His breakthrough novel was also coincident with a theory of postmodernism that is now looking like the historical emanation of a particular conjuncture of economics, conservative politics, and the place of critical theory in the academy that was very specific to the 1980s. Csicsery-Ronay's theoretical framework is sometimes very Jamesonian—very eighties, in other words. There are lots of *gestures* towards contemporary sf, but very few detailed readings of books from the last twenty years. The risk, then, is that this book ties sf to a

moment of apotheosis that is already past. This is what the cutting-edge, presentist defense will always risk—and it is perhaps what has also ironically delayed the publication of *Seven Beauties*, since, as Csicsery-Ronay fears in his first pages, he must always be running to catch up because he is always already out of date, a steampunk critic, retrofitted to a contemporary situation that has morphed beyond capture.

The very great insights of this book did not need to be married to this presentism. At least three of these chapters are pedagogical beauties that deserve to be given to all students and critics of the genre because of their wonderfully crisp and orderly formulations, the product of a lifetime of reading deep into the history of the genre. Another three include genuinely new, exciting work at the very forefront of sf criticism and are littered with conceptual bombs that will be exploding in my head for many years to come. I hope that Csicsery-Ronay will publish some of his earlier essays in a separate collection, where it would be possible to track the shift of his attention from postmodern paradigms towards his more recent concerns with the post-national, the matter of Empire, Japanese sf, and also his new work on animals and kindred species. I also hope that the prospect of a different kind of mapping of contemporary sf, hinted at in the introduction, an investigation of new narrative multiplicities in television arcs and gaming worlds, and a new sense of the globality of sf, will be forthcoming. I will stop short of advocating that everyone stop sending in material to *SFS* in order to give Istvan the time to write, but please do stand back, stand back: give the doctor the space he needs to work.

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Samuel Gerald Collins

Fiddling with Le Guin: Making New Connections with Science Fiction's Anthropologist

Freedman, Carl, ed. *Conversations with Ursula K. Le Guin*. LITERARY CONVERSATIONS. Jackson, MI: UP of Mississippi, 2008. xxiv + 182 pp. \$50 pbk.

Kelso, Sylvia, ed. *Ursula K. Le Guin. Paradoxa* 21 (2008). 313 pp. \$24 pbk.

Ursula K. Le Guin is not an anthropologist. There, I said it. Whenever I write anything about anthropology and science fiction, I invariably get comments like "Why don't you write more about Le Guin? Her father was Alfred Kroeber, you know." Mind you, I do not find this upsetting. I have always loved reading Le Guin—her fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. *The Language of the Night* (1979) was my first semi-scholarly book acquisition when I was around 11; my first publication included a discussion of gender and language in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969). But I have never really considered her an anthropologist. And, finally, I have proof—her own musings on this and countless other subjects in a priceless collection of interviews held between 1980 and 2006, collected and edited by Carl Freedman for Mississippi's LITERARY CONVERSATIONS series. There she confesses that she did not really read her father's work until much later in life (as preparation for *Always Coming Home* [1985]) and that, as she says, "my entire formal training in this area amounts to one physical anthropology class" (101).

But, of course, there is more to Le Guin's anthropology than that. What Freedman describes as Le Guin's penchant for challenging the "interviewer's assumptions" (ix) means that her answers demand that we situate her work in the shifting constellations of discourse that it engages. There are no easy reductions of her work to convenient labels such as "feminist" or "ecological," and these interviews represent nothing less than Le Guin's efforts to complicate the tableau vivant to which she is sometimes reduced in popular accounts and anthologies.

The second collection—a special issue of *Paradoxa* on Le Guin—picks up on this theme, with its varied contributors stretching Le Guin into new critical territory, including feminist-informed posthumanism (Kasi Jackson), terrorism (Marleen S. Barr), superstring theory (Beth Snowberger), and subaltern deconstructions of the frontier (Traci Thomas-Card).

Each of these collections can be seen as versions of what Sylvia Kelso calls scaling "Mt. Le Guin" (Kelso 11): i.e., each takes on Le Guin's vast corpus, together with the massive secondary literature that has accompanied it. It is, after all (and nowhere so obvious as in *SFS*), not too much to suggest that Le Guin has been one animus for sf criticism itself. Kelso divides this mountain into three faces: a "Taoist" face, a "feminist" face ("most frequently traversed"), and a somewhat less explored "utopian" face (9-10).

Given Le Guin's inclination toward cycles of travel and return (what Le Guin herself self-effacingly calls the "Le Guin plot" [Freedman 16]), the metaphor of the mountain seems entirely appropriate, although the regular revelation of new "faces" strains the metaphor, as does Le Guin's continued use of the cycle. An active volcano? A burgeoning mountain on the edge of a tectonic uplift?

Instead of spatial metaphors, I would suggest one drawn from anthropology—that of kinship and genealogy. At one time, anthropologists considered kinship—the classification of relationships, the tracing of lineage—to be at the core of human culture. Thought to exist in the liminal zone between nature and culture, rules of kinship were supposed to use social and cultural forms to regulate, mobilize, and make sense of biological reproduction. In fact, if we go back to Kroeber's enormous *Handbook of Indians of California* (1925), we can see, besides detailed notes on languages, myth, and religion, a surfeit of kinship—kinship terminologies, notes on totems, kinship-based taboos and avoidances. These were the data upon which Kroeber's contemporaries built anthropological science, with kinship forming the foundation for its universalist pretensions. In the decades following Kroeber's work, however, kinship gradually lost its status as the philosopher's stone of anthropology, and the idea that kinship represented the basis of culture seemed increasingly jejune, an artifact of our own assumptions about the family. Are people "naturally" related? Can kinship nomenclature be translated across cultures? Do these terms even have stable meanings within the boundaries of our own culture? Over the same period, nature became rather less natural—always already Hegelian second nature. Following World War II, genetic material has been rendered more and more fungible, less tied to specific species and phylogenies (in the case of GMO and transgenic organisms). More and more, nature and culture swap positions across constellations of power and knowledge.

Despite these challenges to kinship, genealogical thinking is still widely deployed in anthropology to establish theoretical kinship—so and so taught so and so, who went on to found her own segmentary lineage of theory. The intellectual histories anthropologists tell themselves are self-consciously patterned on these nineteenth-century understandings of kinship and descent, nature and culture. Given Le Guin's parentage, it is not particularly surprising that many of her interlocutors in *Conversations* attempt to interpret her work in the idiom of family and inheritance, to which Le Guin is the skeptical gadfly, negotiating with what amounts to a Mendelian hermeneutics. The *Paradoxa* collection elaborates on this, mounting a kind of transgenic interpretation of Le Guin's work in relation to contemporary theorizing.

Le Guin and Patrilineality. The general assumption is that Le Guin's anthropological predilections come from her father's work. But what these critics mean is a kind of anthropology credited to students of Franz Boas, the pioneering anthropologist who founded the first anthropology department in the US (at Columbia), and whose students included Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Zora Neale Hurston. This includes what we now term "anthropological holism"—the idea that culture should be studied as a bounded,

homogenous, “shared” understanding, that “man” is, after Ruth Benedict, “a little creature of his culture” (Benedict 2-3). And because culture was conceptualized as an integrated and bounded object, each could act as a “laboratory” for human variation (Benedict 17). This was the kind of anthropology ascribed to Le Guin by Fredric Jameson in his 1975 essay, in which “world reduction” meant to “provide something like an experimental variation on our empirical universe” (269). This kind of anthropology is a direct inheritor of a “lost worlds” narrative in which an intrepid explorer discovers a hermetically sealed culture “lost in time.” Certainly the pioneering anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1961) had something like H. Rider Haggard in mind when he asked his readers to “imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight” (4).

How similar is this to Ged’s journey through Earthsea or Genly Ai’s to Gethen? In the *Paradoxa* collection, Vera Benczik suggests the centrality of the trope, pointing out that “Le Guin’s work uses the physical journey to react to its ‘territories’ of difference” (75). Indeed, the metaphor of the transformative journey to territories temporally and spatially removed from “civilization” (however defined) would seem to locate Le Guin firmly within this procrustean anthropological tradition.

Yet despite her often repeated claim that “My father did the real thing; I make it up” (Freedman 55), it seems unlikely that Le Guin really sees herself as the sf version of an anthropologist, at least not in the sense of an anthropology of the 1940’s—that heir to lost-world mythologies and pastoral evocations of small societies. For example, even though Jameson places her in the William Morris tradition, Le Guin insists that her work is closer to urban complexity than to the pastoral idyll. As she tells Wickes and Westling, “A city is where all dangers come together for human beings, where everything happens to human beings. I use ‘city’ in a fairly metaphorical sense. A city is where culture comes together and flowers. A pueblo is a city” (Freedman 18).

Le Guin resists easy identification with her anthropological parentage. Barrow and Barrow (1991) analyze the Earthsea cycle in light of Kroeber’s publications on Northwest-coast Indians, but Le Guin explains that she never read her father’s work until she started to sketch the background for *Always Coming Home* (1985). She tells Escudié, “I didn’t read my father’s work until I was quite a grown woman, and already had found my own way as a writer, so I don’t think his writings really influenced me that much” (Freedman 134-35). Indeed, in his contribution to *Paradoxa*, Robert Erlich (149) turns to Kroeber for a discussion of subsistence and civilization, but without, I think, demonstrating that Le Guin drew on that particular text.

Mythology, too—running like a golden thread through Le Guin’s work—is often credited to her parents, in this case, both Alfred and Theodora (who also collected Native American myths in *The Inland Whale* [1963]). But, again she reminds Escudié:

My father's work with myths and legends was with the Yurok and Karuk and Mojave Indians of California, very different people; their myths are very different. I was not influenced by those directly because I read them late in life. They are totally different from our literary tradition and it would be very hard to work them in stories. (Freedman 134)

She even bristles at the idea that she is a "mythopoetic writer" (Freedman 134), suggesting that "myth" is (after Durkheim) a social fact, not something that can be created *ex nihilo* in an author's mind. "So do we write myth at all? Or is the word really misapplied to novels and the kinds of stories we tell?" (Freedman 135).

Nevertheless, despite her disavowals, she acknowledges an anthropological influence. She tells Broughton that "I have this advantage of not being ethnocentric, of not being culture bound.... The world came as a shock when I realized everyone wasn't an anthropologist or an Indian and wasn't interested in facts and artifacts and the structure of society" (Freedman 54). But her "anthropology" is atmospheric and proximal rather than a conscious program: "I grew up amongst anthropologists, Indians, refugees from Nazi Germany, crazy ethnologists" (Freedman 6). This is not an anthropology *per se*, but a more stochastic anthropological muse, one that ultimately gestures to another kind of anthropology altogether.

By all accounts, the young Le Guin was surrounded by west coast intellectuals and expatriates of all kinds. Really, her parents (and her father in particular) were some of the last representatives of a kind of nineteenth-century intellectual that no longer exists—the restless polymath. While Kroeber had certainly specialized, he never lost his interest in literature (his undergraduate major), nor in psychology (his minor). According to Le Guin, he was also an "orthodox Freudian" lay analyst (Freedman 14). Actually, many of Franz Boas's students dabbled in psychoanalysis, wrote poetry, patronized the arts, and weighed in on politics. In fact, Kroeber developed as an anthropologist when disciplinarity was not yet entrenched, and when anthropology regularly included multiple discourses that have now been carefully separated.

It was this kind of anthropology that Le Guin seems to have inherited—not a patrimony of assumptions about culture, religion, mythology, and gender but a style of restless engagement with knowledge and science. At the very least, this describes an open-ended process—less of an inheritance than a transgenic accretion. As Le Guin says of working on *The Word for World is Forest* (1976), "It's fiddle, fiddle, fiddle, trying to get all the pieces together" (Freedman 41).

Rhizomatic Le Guin. At some point in the 1980s, Lévi-Strauss's celebrated "bricoleur" (literally a kind of jack-of-all-trades handyman) became a better metaphor for the anthropologist than that of the scientist. This was not only because of the theoretical eclecticism of the field, but also because of the shift in methodological emphasis from the apprehension of cultural "wholes" to tracing the emergent connections between and among different parts of life, technologies, institutions, and practices. This is anthropology-as-assemblage rather than anthropology-as-genealogy, with one's intellectual forbears construed as

affinities, some elected, some not, and all possessing the potential to spontaneously combine with each other to form new meanings. Kelso's special issue of *Paradoxa* explores such a recombinant "anthropology."

In her contribution to *Paradoxa*, Keating conceptualizes this as an "archipelagic aesthetic," where the job of interpretation involves articulating submerged connections between disparate, separate territories. For Keating, this means, for example, expounding upon the Yijing in *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971), even though, as she admits, "No epigraphs, after all, come from the Yijing" and that "Lathe's title derives from the Zhuangzi," and that, finally, no one else has considered the Yijing as a foundational text in Le Guin's work (91). Nevertheless, Keating argues that we must consider the Yijing relevant since it underlies both the Zhuangzi and the Daosejing. Keating's archipelagic approach proves popular with other contributions as well, all of which take Le Guin to variously submerged places off the map of her own fiction.

Several of the essays explore personal appropriations of Le Guin. For Warren Rochelle, for example, *The Dispossessed* (1974) becomes both animus and obstacle to his own writing: "I wish I had written *The Dispossessed*. And when I have sat down to write, I can feel its weight—and the weight of Le Guin's fiction in general—in my own words and my ideas" (Kelso 298). But others take Le Guin to more distant territories indeed. Beth Snowberger's *Paradoxa* essay considers *The Dispossessed* in light of superstring theory, a TOE (Theory of Everything) to which Le Guin (metaphorically) alludes in her efforts to reconcile utopian possibility and lived reality, individual and society, theory and practice. And the chronological problems do not bother her. As Snowberger argues, "It is a mark of her imaginative power" that *The Dispossessed* came out in 1974, while superstring theory is most associated with theoretical breakthroughs in the 1980s (Kelso 56).

Le Guin is represented as similarly ahead of the curve in theorizing about human-animal biosocialities. In her "Schrödinger's Cat" (orig. 1974) and other stories collected in *Buffalo Gals* (1987), Le Guin probes the borders between the human and other animals, critiquing the limits of dualistic thinking that pits animal and human against each other and also the confusion of collapsing one into the other, ethology into ethnology. Kasi Jackson suggests that

To reclaim what has been lost, Le Guin encourages us to think about the "habitual ways" human knowledge systems, including scientific and feminist accounts, construct the animal. She complicates animal models in ways consistent with feminist critiques of science and with the animal behavior scientist's goal of understanding of/ appreciation for/ communication with animals. (Kelso 207)

Similarly, Le Guin is said to anticipate masculinity studies in Linda Wright's essay (Kelso 169). Traci Card's contribution, on the other hand, sees postcolonial deconstructions of frontier mythology in Le Guin's short story "Sur" (1982), in which South American women discover the South Pole well before Scott's hyper-masculinist expedition.

All these contributions underscore Le Guin's often repeated point that "utopia is process rather than progress" (Freedman 140). That is, rather than sketch a

place outside space and time in the sense of More's utopia, Le Guin's "playful utopia" is all about subversive alternatives: heterotopias. The "spiral structure" (Freedman 139) of Le Guin's plots exemplifies this process, where the goal is the journey to engage difference and to explore emancipatory possibility, to shake the reader "from the lazy, timorous habit of thinking that the way we live now is the only way people can live" (Freedman 138).

There is, then, an alternative to Le Guin's "lineage"—not only her intellectual relationship to her parents, but to all of the other intellectual "kin" with which she is grouped—second-wave feminism, utopian politics, science fiction, and fantasy. Analyses of "households" have long been an important corrective to an over-reliance on abstract ideals of kinship, descent, and family—the members of a household may be variously related or unrelated, its size and constitution may shift over time, and the relationships between members may also change. Studying households takes anthropologists into the complexity of everyday life, including countless kinds of relatedness and resource-sharing. What ends up in one's house is less the product of some absolute calculus of genealogy than an admixture of choice, necessity, and serendipity.

Dwelling in the House of Le Guin. Many of the interviews in Freedman's collection take place in Le Guin's Portland home, where she has lived for decades. But it is her childhood home in Berkeley that is the focus of her remarkable contribution to the *Paradoxa* collection. Designed by Bernard Maybeck, an enthusiastic student of William Morris, the house embodies her approach to literature, where, she writes, "aesthetic meaning was not a final declaration made by the architect, but the result of an ongoing dialogue between builder and dwellers. In its *inhabitation* a house's beauty would be active and fulfilled" (124). That is, the utopian promise in Maybeck's architecture lay in its capacity to enjoin inhabitants in an ongoing dialogue on the good life, rather than, *pace* Corbusier, to structure habitus. That is, Le Guin's household is one where the intellectual process takes precedence over the intellectual patrimony and, instead of being reducible to single themes or affiliations, Le Guin's work is itself a process of continuous revelation—there are still plenty of secret rooms, nooks, and crannies in that house (136).

That also describes Le Guin's anthropology more accurately than any fealty to Alfred (or Theodora) Kroeber's writings. It is not a mistake, I think, that one of her endearing memories from her childhood seems to have been the many people who visited her home—all the scholars from around the world, the various informants with whom Kroeber worked: an anthropology of increasingly reticulate connections between people and ideas. As she remarks in a 1980 interview with Anne Mellor:

The best family friend was an Indian who came to stay with us for six weeks every summer. He was just a member of the family. I actually thought I was related to Juan. You know how kids are, they take all of this for granted. Obviously, something seeped through, a kind of cultural relativism, a kind of nobody really has the word but everybody's word is worth listening to. (Freedman 6)

Whether those words are Le Guin's or another's is, in this sense, immaterial: all somehow connect together in the house of Le Guin. And in the end, what these two collections describe is less of a kinship chart of Le Guin than a household, a continuously emerging foment of ideas, both from Le Guin herself and from the many scholars interpreting her work.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Calm, Clinical, Direct. J.G. Ballard. *Miracles of Life, Shanghai to Shepperton: An Autobiography*. London: Fourth Estate, 2008. 278 pp. £14.99 hc.

J.G. Ballard died on 19 April 2009 of an inoperable cancer that had spread from his prostate to his ribs and spine—a diagnosis he details in the final chapter of *Miracles of Life* with the calm, clinical directness typical of the author. He credits his doctor, a renowned cancer specialist, with giving him the courage to tackle the writing of his autobiography, support for which we can all be grateful since this is an eloquent and moving chronicle. Little here qualifies as new information, however: his novels *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (1991) had already laid out the basic narrative of Ballard's fraught childhood in Shanghai, including his two-year internment by the Japanese during WWII and his postwar life in Britain as a medical student, RAF trainee pilot, widowed father, and celebrated writer of sf and avant-garde fictions.

But those works were artistic inventions that took occasional liberties with the facts in order to produce compelling and carefully crafted stories. *Empire of the Sun*, for example, is one of the most brilliant treatments of the figure of the war orphan in contemporary literature, yet a large measure of its impact would have been blunted if Ballard had not decided to edit his parents out of his account of his years of confinement in Lunghua Camp. While the novel was "firmly based on true experiences," as he testifies, "some of the events described are imaginary" (250)—and part of the pleasure of reading *Miracles of Life* is ferreting out the various changes and inconsistencies. Many of the scenes described in *Empire of the Sun* are included here in their full vividness: the beggars dying on the Shanghai sidewalks while the wealthy Europeans drive past in their gleaming Packards, the youthful Jim bicycling through the war-ravaged streets, the casual brutality of Japanese soldiers beating Chinese peasants, the Lunghua prisoners consuming weevils to keep up their protein intake, American fighter planes swooping over the camp amidst exploding flak from anti-aircraft guns mounted on a pagoda, and so on. Other deeply affecting scenes—such as Jim watching teenage kamikaze pilots prepare to depart for battle or witnessing from afar the flash of the atomic bomb at Nagasaki—are absent, but one understands (and is grateful for) the aesthetic license that led Ballard to include them in the novel. Still, it is amazing how much of that extraordinary work was rooted in real events, as *Miracles of Life* makes plain; it is evidence of just how formative these early experiences were on the author that almost half this autobiography is devoted to his first fifteen years of life.

Has any other sf writer had a more tortuous, action-packed childhood? Most likely not, and as Ballard stresses, his early exposure to radically disruptive events—such as the sudden collapse of colonial power in Asia, with its attendant overturning of national and racial hierarchies that had seemed firmly settled—made him particularly attuned to the waves of change sweeping through the twentieth century that sf was uniquely suited to confront and express. Yet Ballard's personal encounter with the genre was oblique and late in coming; earlier influences included Modernist literature, film noir, Surrealist art, and

psychoanalysis—"foreign" phenomena he avidly devoured in the early 1950s as he sought to "save myself from the suffocations of English life" (132). Seeming to provide "an escape route, a secret corridor into a more real and more meaningful world" (134), these materials fired his mind but led only to abortive attempts at creative writing, "'experimental' short stories, which usually proved the experiment had failed" (131). Things changed for the better when, during a six-month stint of flight training in Saskatchewan, Ballard discovered American magazine sf, especially the new digests *Galaxy* and *F&SF*. Here was a fiction that boldly engaged the contemporary world of "television, advertising and the American media landscape" in a style that was "often as elliptical and ambiguous as Kafka" (166). Soon, under the encouraging hand of John Carnell, editor of *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*, he was publishing his own strange and haunting sf stories, "looking for the pathology that underlay the consumer society, the TV landscape and the nuclear arms race, a vast untouched continent of fictional possibility" (167). Yet oddly, he was for some time unable to break through into the American market, where a "fierce orthodoxy ruled, and any attempt to enlarge the scope of traditional science fiction was regarded as conspiratorial and underhand" (179).

There is a curious elision here that Ballard never teases out himself: why were the US magazines so welcoming to the "comic infernos" of Pohl, Sheekley, and Kornbluth yet dismissive of his own similarly themed efforts? Blaming this merely on American narrow-mindedness, as he does, is hardly an adequate explanation, especially given that US *book* editors such as Judith Merrill and Damon Knight proved quite open to Ballard's work, Merrill giving him his initial stateside publication in her reprint series *World Best S-F* while Knight, at Berkley Books, contracted for his first novels and story collections in the early 1960s. This collusion between American and British sf rebels, which eventually led to the transatlantic eruption of the New Wave, is invisible in Ballard's account. Indeed, despite praising the "huge vitality" of modern sf and defending it as "the true literature of the twentieth century" (189, 194), Ballard mentions no sf writers by name: the only genre figures he even acknowledges are Carnell and Michael Moorcock, both in their capacity as editors of *New Worlds*.

In other words, sf historians looking for insider information on the complex contours of the emerging New Wave are bound to be disappointed by *Miracles of Life*. At the same time, Old Guard fans who have always argued that Ballard is not really an sf writer at all will find much ammunition here: indeed, he seems to align himself more with visual artists such as Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton, who drew eclectically on sf imagery, rather than with specifically literary talents in or outside of the genre. The contempt he expresses for the sf establishment—gutless, incestuous, and "emotionally tied to the status quo" (192)—is as nothing beside the scorn he heaps on small-press poets and mainstream novelists, many of whom he claims would not survive without Arts Council funding and most of whom "were still locked into a literary sensibility that would have been out of date in the 1920s" (222). He admits to being much more comfortable with doctors, scientists, and other professionals—such as his good friend Christopher Evans, who became the Science Editor for *New Worlds*

and the distant model for Vaughn, the “hoodlum scientist” in *Crash* (1972)—and more comfortable reading the “invisible literature” that fills their wastebaskets (“handouts, brochures, research papers and annual reports from university labs and psychiatric institutions” [214]) than the Booker Prize short-list.

Miracles of Life is fairly comprehensive up through the writing of *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) and *Crash*, notorious works of willful excess designed to illustrate Ballard’s conviction that human beings “had far darker imaginations than we liked to believe” (238). From that point onwards, the book leaps rapidly through the decades, with two brisk chapters devoted to the writing and filming of *Empire of the Sun* and Ballard’s subsequent return to Shanghai and Lunghua in 1991, where he movingly searched “for my younger self, the boy in the Cathedral School cap and blazer who had played hide-and-seek with [his] friends half a century earlier” (268). Since the book closes with the acknowledgement of an imminent medical death sentence, it is possible that Ballard simply ran out of time and energy before he could fill in the remaining gaps. More likely, however, his last four decades involved a working out of obsessional patterns formed quite early in life, and so it seemed perhaps redundant to rehearse the inspiration for his many later works (which include eight novels published after *Empire*, none mentioned here). It is also true that Ballard’s adult life, despite some dabblings on the fringes of the 1960s counterculture, was considerably more sedate and sedentary than his feverish, deracinated childhood: he lived until his death in the modest suburban home in Shepperton he bought with his wife Mary in the early 1960s, where he brought up his three children alone following her shocking sudden death. Much of his daily life consisted of domestic routines too mundane to chronicle—though Ballard is justifiably proud of his bemused, tolerant parenting, the warm happy chaos of home life that provided the ideal emotional support for his imagination’s wild flights. We can all, sf fans or not, be grateful that he found such a nurturing space, since it made possible a body of work that ranks with the very best that science fiction—not to mention postwar world literature—has produced.

Incidentally, a brief footnote to that estimable oeuvre appeared in *The New Yorker* on 11 May 2009, a month after Ballard’s death. Entitled “The Autobiography of J.G.B.,” it is a gentle apocalyptic fantasy in which the protagonist awakes in a world mysteriously emptied of all life save for the birds in the London Zoo. Yet despite being abruptly abandoned and isolated, he stays upbeat, making “preparations for survival” by gathering a stockpile of food and weapons; comfortably ensconced in his Shepperton home, he amiably feeds the birds and resolutely prepares “to begin his true work.” The story is classic Ballard, lyrical and haunting, reminding us that, though he has now left us, his stoic spirit soldiers on in some quiet suburb of the mind that he has made all his own.—**Rob Latham, SFS**

The Unease of Modern Life. Jo Collins and John Jervis, eds. *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. viii + 234 pp. \$69.95 hc.

Uncanny Modernity is a collection of essays that aims to read aspects of contemporary experience in the framework of the Freudian uncanny: that is, as at once familiar and disturbingly disorienting. Freud's 1919 paper on the uncanny, a key text upon which many of these essays rely, describes it as a kind of haunting from the past, whether individual (the return of the repressed) or communal (the return of primitive beliefs). Although only tangentially concerned with science fiction (which is, after all, a genre more oriented to the future), the collection as a whole—which includes the editors' introduction and eleven essays by a wide-ranging group of contributors—provides a substantial framework within which to undertake some serious reflection on the potential representation of uncanny experience within sf's story-worlds. In fictions by writers such as Philip K. Dick and J.G. Ballard, for example, we have ample evidence of how intensely the uncanny can haunt science-fictional worlds. Sf's potential for providing experiences of defamiliarization suggests one potential direction in which the genre can open out to the uncanny. In this context, it is worth noting that two of the early sf pulp magazines were titled *Uncanny Tales*.

Following Freud, the editors of *Uncanny Modernity* describe the uncanny as "an experience of disorientation, where the world in which we live suddenly seems strange, alienating or threatening" (1). They argue that modern experiences of the uncanny suggest "a fundamental *indecision*, an obscurity or uncertainty, at the heart of our ontology, our sense of time, place, and history, both personal and cultural" (2; emphasis in original). All the essays that they have collected in various ways address experiences of the uncanny associated with our lives in modernity, including "the 'technological uncanny,' the suggestion that photo, film and phone have all been resources through which the uncanny presence of a disturbing otherness is revealed" (1). While the aim of *Uncanny Modernity* is to explore the uncanny as "a certain sensibility" (2) or experience of the modern, the editors also note some of the uncanny features particular to postmodernity, often associated as it is with simulation and hyperreality.

Most of this collection is well worth reading. I found particularly interesting Jervis's "Uncanny Presences," a lengthy discussion of visibility, the image, presence, and representation, that also provides a substantial (re)introduction to the history and typology of the modern uncanny—such as "the 'mechanical' uncanny of dolls and automata, where representation becomes reproduction, nature becomes artefact, and the result hints at 'unnatural' life" (13). Tom Gunning's "Uncanny Reflections, Modern Illusions: Sighting the Modern Optical Uncanny" is of particular interest for its commentary on the "magical" aspects of visual technologies. Roger Luckhurst's "The Uncanny After Freud: The Contemporary Trauma Subject and the Fiction of Stephen King" addresses questions of the subject, examining "the rewriting of the self" (131) that seems to occur during experiences of "recovered memory" and tracing "the modern link between trauma and the uncanny" (132) in King's fiction. In addition, Michael Saler's "Profane Illuminations, Delicate and Mysterious Flames: Mass Culture and Uncanny Gnosis" includes a discussion of Dick's science fiction (read in the company of André Breton and Umberto Eco). For all three, Saler argues,

“uncanny experiences ... challenge consensual reality and suggest that other possibilities are accessible to reasoned reflection” (184).

As I suggested above, *Uncanny Modernity* is only indirectly relevant to sf. In its indirection, however, there are some fine insights to be gained about the uncanny experiences of our lives in post/modernity and about sf’s potential for narrating those experiences. Given the high price of this collection, which is not so far available in softcover, I recommend that readers in a position to do so consider ordering this collection for their college and university libraries.—**Veronica Hollinger, SFS**

What All the Fuss Is About: WisCon 2007. L. Timmel Duchamp and Eileen Gunn, eds. *The WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 2: Provocative Essays on Feminism, Race, Revolution, and the Future*. Seattle: Aqueduct Press, 2008. x + 199 pp. \$17.50 pbk.

This volume is not held together by its content, which is even wider ranging than for most cons with academic components. Contributors include academics, writers, fans, politicians, and undergraduates. Contributions range from some outstanding academic essays, to interesting reflections by writers, to a workshop on responding to misogyny or racism in writing workshops, to a blog. The volume is held together, though, by the short and whimsical introduction by Duchamp and Gunn, by the beginning and ending dialogues between the two guest of honor writers, and by interspersed reflections on WisCon 2007, the thirty-first feminist sf convention, and predictions for what will take place at WisCon 2018. Still, the volume would have been improved greatly by adding a good index.

I shall begin with the threads that hold the volume together, then review the high points. The guests of honor, Laurie J. Marks, and her editor and also a writer, Kelly Link, interview each other about fantasy writing to open the volume and conduct a dialogue on sf to close it. In the beginning interview, Marks explains that her *LOGIC* series (2002-07) explores the problem of human violence, especially questioning the romanticization of resistance. Link is especially insightful on the way the hero grapples with a developing power for the first time in the genre of young-adult fantasy. Writers might be interested in their description of the process of revising and editing, here in Marks’s words: “When you’re editing, it only affects the particular piece you’re working on, but when you’re revising, if you change something it changes everything” (10). Scholars will be interested in Link’s description of “communal writing,” sf writers sitting in a cafe and writing in parallel; she cites herself, Shelley Jackson, Holly Black, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Karen Joy Fowler (11). At the end of the volume, in an epistolary exchange conducted by email, Link and Marks leave analysis behind and give us pure pleasure, ruminating on the nature of writing, but also on their friendship and the nature of friendship in general. Here are two good quotations from that exchange. In a sentence only a lover of science fiction could have written, Marks tells us, “I think novels need a higher coherence quotient because they have more entropy” (191). On the nature of writing, Link adds, “I want the story to have enough momentum so that at the moment of ending, it’s as if the

reader has been hurtling along, picking up enough speed as she goes that she keeps on going past the point where the story ends" (192).

Throughout the volume, conference participants offer reminiscences of WisCon 2007 and predictions for WisCon 2018. Mark Rich, Nisi Shawl, Susan Simensky Bietila, Rosalyn Berne, and Jacqueline A. Gross comment on their 2007 experiences, reflecting on the logistics and the values of the conference. W. J. Hardman, Nicola Griffith, Nora Jemison, Kate Schaefer, Elizabeth Bear, Lawrence Schimel, and Joan Haran predict that WisCon 2018 will still be considering current issues: water scarcity, inequality, racism, same-sex rights, and methods of negotiation between peoples that do not involve force.

The heart of the volume is the record of the "Romance of Revolution" panel chaired by Paul Kincaid and including Duchamp, Chris Nakashima-Brown, and Lyn Paleo. K. Joyce Tsai, who was sent to report on the panel, became so infuriated by the Western focus that she simply copied her blog rant for the volume. The editors then struggle with how to tell the whole story of the panel. They settle for a transcript and further essays by Nakashima-Brown and Duchamp. This event, the problem it creates, and the editors' solution are the heart of the volume because they repeat with depth and commitment the struggle of feminists to find just ways to talk about politics and speculative literature.

Other sections of the volume fruitfully address speculative writing and teaching. Tom La Farge reports on a panel on the "multimindedness" of animals, suggesting a kind of collective intelligence that sf might explore. Naamen Gobert Tilahun critiques a panel on first contacts, reflecting on the requirement for feminists to see themselves as both colonizer and colonized. Reflecting that a writing voice is always a performance, L. Timmel Duchamp provides a brilliant essay on gender of the author, the relation to audience, and the resulting effects on the sf of Ursula K. Le Guin, Eileen Gunn, and James Tiptree, Jr. Finally, there is a long and wonderful section on "How to Deal with Racist and Sexist Material in Workshops," covering both workshop leaders' and participants' perspectives, with comments by Rachel Swirsky, Nora Khan, Ericka Crouse, Anna Schwind, Maria Deira, Jenny Zhang, Stephanie Denise Brown, Nisi Shawl, K. Tempest Bradford, Richard Jeffrey Newman, Sue Lange, Alaya Dawn Johnson, Eugie Foster, Alyx Dellamonica, Ross Wagner, and Katherine Sparrow.

I would recommend this volume for anyone who has attended WisCon, for scholars and readers interested in the nature of conventions as a forum, for general readers interested in the liberatory end of sf, and for libraries that emphasize popular culture. While I have never been to WisCon, this volume makes me want to come see what all the fuss is about.—**Jane Donawerth, University of Maryland**

No Breakthroughs, but One Good Essay. James Holden and Simon King. *Conceptual Breakthrough: Star/Alien*. Ashby, Leicestershire, UK: InkerMen Press, 2007. xii + 137 pp. £9.95 pbk.

The opening pages of this slim volume do not inspire much interest or confidence. The problem is not just some incidental silliness (e.g., one author's proclaiming himself to have "spent many happy years on the planet

Tralfamadore" [v]) but, more important, the central claim announced in the title and reiterated in the authors' Introduction. One tends to mistrust a work that explicitly claims to be making a "conceptual breakthrough" in its field; and this mistrust is reinforced when, as here, the field is one—sf criticism—of which, as the Introduction suggests and as the main texts and the bibliographies appear to confirm, the authors know relatively little.

Of the two essays that follow the Introduction, one—"Alien," by Simon King (the Tralfamadorian)—justifies such initial dubiousness. At one point King suggests his central thesis to be that the alien in sf generally turns out to be not so very alien after all: that aliens are in fact "all *too* familiar" (78; emphasis in original). This seems a potentially fruitful idea. Unfortunately, King does not keep it in view consistently enough to actualize what potential it may have. His disorganized essay meanders from one topic to another, managing along the way to offer a few mildly interesting comments on the sf of Iain M. Banks, Larry Niven, James Blish, and H.G. Wells (on the last of whom King is actually quite good), but never really presenting a coherent literary-critical argument. What we do get, instead, is an astonishingly regressive *metaphysical* argument, one heavily influenced by Michael Bakunin: essentially, a protest, from the viewpoint of nineteenth-century organicist humanism, against modern abstraction as typified by science or pornography. Of course, even those of us who feel confident that today both pornography and science have far more to offer than any sort of neo-romantic organicism must be willing to consider a truly rigorous argument for the latter, irretrievably exhausted though it may appear to be. But there is little rigor or cognitive substance in King's own argument. He assumes, for example, that irrationalism is the protest of the individual subject, completely ignoring the fact that irrationalist movements invariably aim to annihilate individual autonomy. He also—and perhaps worst of all—calmly equates science with a nineteenth-century Gradgrindian cult of "fact": a view that never held much philosophical water and that seems merely ridiculous after a century of quantum mechanics and Einsteinian relativity. A critic adrift in such confusions should be more modest about claiming to have achieved a "conceptual breakthrough."

The other essay in the volume, James Holden's "Star," offers no conceptual breakthroughs either. But it does achieve some excellent literary criticism: largely because, unlike King's piece, it pursues and substantiates a coherent thesis in a clear, interesting, convincing way. After a preliminary glance at Wordsworth's neglected (but quite pertinent) poem "Star-Gazers" (1806), Holden begins his main argument by considering Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* (1956)—which not only is one of the most widely praised modern sf novels but also whose very title conveys, as Holden points out, one of the frequent impulses of much science fiction. Through a detailed reading of Bester's novel (one of the most attentive yet offered), Holden persuasively maintains that "rather than being *the* destination, the stars in Bester's text are often what the French philosopher Jacques Derrida would call an *adestination*—a point that it is always possible not to reach" (17; emphasis in original). The concept of the *adestination* (which Holden takes from "Le Facteur de la Vérité" [1975], Derrida's famous deconstruction of Lacan's reading of Edgar Allan Poe) becomes the central

methodological category of Holden's essay. Operating very much in the main tradition of Anglophone Derridean criticism from Paul de Man onwards, Holden strives to show that literature (in this case mainly, though not exclusively, sf literature) tends to perform self-deconstructions, that is, to enact rhetorically the conundrums and aporetic paradoxes that have been philosophically formulated by Derrida. He demonstrates that the stars turn out to be more an adestation than anyone's actual destination not only in Bester but also in sf by Arthur C. Clarke, Samuel Delany, H.G. Wells, and Edmond Hamilton. His readings of individual texts are invariably interesting, and his overall case is convincingly made.

Delany is surely the central figure for Holden's argument, more so than Holden himself makes completely clear. Holden might, for instance, have noted Delany's frequent expressions of personal interest in and overt use of Derrida, whom Delany, evidently alone among sf authors, was seriously reading well before the French theorist became fashionable in academic English studies. But Holden does devote more space to Delany than to any other author, reserving his main stress for *Empire Star* (1966), but also offering useful comments on *Babel-17* (1966), *Nova* (1968), *Dhalgren* (1975), and *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (1984). *Empire Star* has never, I think, attracted as much attention as it deserves (perhaps because of the greater fame of the exactly contemporary and Nebula-winning *Babel-17*), so Holden's careful reading of this superb short novel is especially welcome. Largely (though not solely) through his consideration of *Empire Star*, Holden shows not only that the stars in sf are frequently a Derridean adestation, but also that sf may even enact a Derridean deconstruction of the binary opposition between star and humanity: "If, in some of the texts I have discussed, the stars can actually be found inside Man, then in others Man seems to be located in the stars" (65).

"Star" is not flawless. Perhaps the worst specific slip is a reference to Descartes as "the German philosopher" (29); and I suspect that Holden might have come closer to making an actual breakthrough in sf criticism if he had commanded greater knowledge of the field (not a personal complaint: I am one of the few sf critics who *is* cited and referenced). But "Star" is a fine essay, and makes the volume worth buying.—**Carl Freedman, Louisiana State University**

Filming the Racial Terrain in Science Fiction. Adilifu Nama. *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2008. ix + 200pp. \$55 hc; \$24.95 pbk.

The common sense about science fiction is that it either avoids or transcends race. Skeptical commentators such as Thulani Davis have assigned to the genre an unwillingness to imagine anything but mono-racial futures structured by the absence of racial difference. In recent years, however, an ever-growing cadre of scholarship has challenged this view, bringing to light the medium's deep investment in producing both topical critiques of contemporary racial mores and extrapolations of racialized futures. In *Black Space*, Adilifu Nama does for sf cinema what Jeffrey Allen Tucker, Michael Pounds, Daniel Bernardi, and others have done for sf literature. He brings to his project a well-informed and panoramic view of twentieth-century science-fiction film. This gives tremendous

authority to his readings of individual films and allows him to put them into productive dialogue with his own argument about the pitfalls and potentials of the form.

Nama is careful to locate his study within a racial terrain that goes beyond the black/white opposition that defines US racial discourse. His central objective, however, is to track how cinematic science fiction has mirrored American racial attitudes and challenged them along the lines of the black/white divide. His basic proposal is that despite sf's reputation for projecting a hegemonic whiteness, blackness is an absence that is also always present in the genre. In this light sf film does more than simply ape the mores of an ascendant racial class: it also functions as a mirror to racial fantasies, anxieties, and even wish fulfillment. It does this sometimes directly and at other times through allegory. Nama offers a series of contrarian readings of sf films that argue for their importance in evaluating current racial attitudes. His desire is to produce the racial readings that no one else will. What he discovers is cause both for chagrin and for celebration. He presents sf cinema as a flexible instrument that can passively reflect the investments of a racist culture but that also produces narratives that mount a liberal critique of racialist investments. Under this rubric Nama's readings of particular films make his case. *When Worlds Collide* (1951) presents a space future founded on the segregationist practices of the late 1940s. *The Time Machine* (1960) reflects the end of Jim Crow through its particular engagement of race and class. And James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986) represents the triumph of an integrationist ethic while broadcasting the anxieties spurred by Latino immigration (109). These interpretations treat sf film as an important expression of American cultural history.

What should be of particular interest to scholars and connoisseurs of sf film is Nama's treatment of films often overlooked or dismissed. He offers, for example, a spirited defense of Marco Brambilla's *Demolition Man* (1993) as important not only for its expression of the racial hysteria that followed the 1992 uprising in Los Angeles but also for its projection (through Wesley Snipes's character) of a racial hybridity that challenges the "strict black-and-white binary construction of American race relations" (91). Nama also does an excellent job of resuscitating Norman Jewison's *Rollerball* (1975). This work prompts us to revise our usual notions about science-fiction film history.

The social conventions of cinematic production of sf films make it inevitable that Nama's work is focused on motion pictures produced by white Hollywood filmmakers. Bringing forward the presence and contributions of African American actors within that system, however, is an important product of his research. This often means that he has to go into the background of a film, uncovering the pivotal role of minor characters and situations. His incisive treatment of Roscoe Lee Browne's voicing of the robot Box in *Logan's Run* (1976) is an example (25).

More recent sf films allow Nama to analyze what happens when African American actors, such as Angela Bassett and Eddie Murphy, take the lead. *Black Space* marks a transition in which blackness has emerged from the thicket of visual masking and metaphor characterized by films such as *Enemy Mine* (1985)

and *Predator* (1987). He notes that it is Will Smith who has become the first black A-list star of sf cinema (though a case could be made for Samuel L. Jackson) and who has changed how blackness is represented in Hollywood sf. The transformation of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) into a vehicle capitalizing on Smith's stardom makes Nama's point.

Unfortunately, Will Smith's *I Am Legend* (2007) post-dates the composition of *Black Space*. Therefore, Nama cannot comment on the weird synergy between Smith's portrayal of Robert Neville and Charlton Heston's characterization in *The Omega Man*, the 1971 adaptation of the same story. Nama notes that Heston's outing emphasizes the value of white male martyrdom to the cause of racial purity. Smith's revision gives us a black male martyrdom with another message of racial salvation. The ethic of heroic masculinity is the same but does it lead us in a similar direction racially? Nama's linking of Heston's last man to a white racist survivalism implies that it does not. So where we are being led? I have my suspicions, but I am more curious as to how Nama would extend his analysis on this point.

Black Space opens up how we think about race in science-fiction cinema. Nama demonstrates a solid understanding of genre conventions, of the potentials and limitations of the form. His interpretations are serious engagements that, in some instances (his analysis of Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* [200]), for example) rise to elegance. He also provides convincing evidence that interest in race requires attention to those differences that condition it as a site of social/cultural meaning. Nama's valuable chapter on class does a nice job of putting his social analysis in motion. Through John Carpenter's *They Live* (1988), for instance, he argues that sf cinema can be a progressive force in "American race and class relations" (122).

There is, however, a major problem with *Black Space* that its author recognizes and over which he has no control. While African American writers have made significant contributions to literary science fiction, that success has not translated into independent or robust accomplishments in cinema. Nama notes that "two of the most self-consciously black SF films in American cinema, *Space Is the Place* (1974) and *The Brother from Another Planet* (1984), were directed and for the most part produced by white men" (154). Outside Will Smith's efforts as actor and producer—in *Hancock* (2008) and *I, Robot* (2004)—sf films authored within the Hollywood system by African Americans are either risible (Eddie Murphy's efforts) or non-existent. So Nama's figuring of a black space in sf film cannot include distinguished or at least interesting work in the genre by African American filmmakers. This is unfortunate, but it is hardly Mr. Nama's fault.

There was not space, given the book's parameters, to mention writer-director Kevin Willmott, an African American filmmaker producing serious, thought-provoking science fictions. His films in this line, *C.S.A.: Confederate States of America* (2004) and *Bunker Hill* (2008), operate outside of the special-effects-laden, action-adventure ethic that has made sf a dominant Hollywood genre. As a result, his work circulates in the independent channels fostered by film festivals, public libraries, and college campuses. Willmott uses sf cinema's rarely exploited capacity to represent complex social issues in a way that captivates and provokes.

In it the black space that Nama opens gains dimension, expressing the historical reality of race and its imbrication in American life with refreshing directness. It is through examining work like this that Nama's questions and approaches provide us with a way forward.—**De Witt Douglas Kilgore, Indiana University**

A Vital SF Resource. Brian Stableford. *Science Fact and Science Fiction: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Routledge, 2006. xxv + 729 pp. \$170 hc.

Brian Stableford is a remarkably prolific writer. A quick count, no doubt already outdated as I write this, includes over 60 novels, 7 collections of stories, 23 translations, 5 anthologies, and 19 non-fiction works. When one considers that he is not much older than the number of novels he has written, and that none of this takes into account the extensive contributions he made to the Clute and Nicholls *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1993), for example, it seems impossible to imagine, at least for a very slow worker such as myself. Admittedly, his recent *Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction* (2004) and *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* (2005), both published by Scarecrow Press, were disappointing, but, according to the Brian Stableford Web Site, they were disappointing to him as well. Nevertheless, most of his work is solid and a remarkable amount of it is important. Beyond his fiction, his *The Scientific Romance in Britain 1890-1950* (1985) is an example of his best analytical work. I believe that the massive tome under review here, *Science Fact and Science Fiction*, is also an example of his best work and that it will prove to be a necessity, albeit an expensive one, for any library, public or personal, that strives for a strong collection on science fiction.

This volume does not bow to visual appeal—it is a dreary grey with blue lettering, designed to slip in among the other reference works at the library. Blessedly, the pages are sturdy and, although printed in two columns, the typeface is of a decent size. This is a workhorse of a volume and my copy will be used as such. The book's subject matter, proclaimed in the introduction's first paragraph, is "the connections between science and fiction" (xvii). Gesturing back to C.P. Snow's two cultures, Stableford goes on to say: "If it is desirable to construct and maintain bridges between the cultures of science and fiction, then a volume like *Science Fact and Science Fiction: An Encyclopedia* will hopefully constitute a significant bridge in itself as well as mapping the existing ones, and might be of use in building more" (xviii). The introduction goes on to outline the relationship between science and literature and Stableford's rationale for selection of subjects and authors to be discussed. It establishes the book's tone, appropriately cool and neutral, but with a distinctive voice that manages a certain elegance and wryness of expression, so that the introduction and the entries seem fair-minded, scholarly, but not dry. For example, in the introduction's brief discussion of the term "science fiction," Stableford makes the point that it "emerged as a labeled genre at exactly the moment in history at which the last vestiges of intellectual communion between scientific and literary men were in the process of being severed, resulting in the emergence, in C.P. Snow's famous formulation, of 'the two cultures'" (xxi).

The volume is organized with, first, an alphabetical list of entries (230 in all), followed by a thematic list broken down usefully into “Celestial Bodies and Phenomena,” “Celestial Bodies and Phenomena: Solar System,” “Concepts” (the largest category), “Genres,” “Leading Figures: Authors,” “Leading Figures: Characters” (just two entries: Faust and Frankenstein), “Leading Figures: Philosophers,” “Leading Figures: Scientists/Authors,” “Pseudoscience,” “Sciences,” “Scientific Models and Theories,” “Scientific Models and Theories: Elements,” “Social Sciences,” and “Technology.” Then comes the introduction which, at 7 pages, seemed too brief, 575 pages of entries, a densely-packed 11-page bibliography, and a thorough index.

Although Stableford has done postgraduate work in biology, he is not himself a scientist. Nonetheless, he has considered the use of science in science fiction before, notably in the 1982 volume written with David Langford and Peter Nicholls, *The Science in Science Fiction*. Here he does so with what seems to me, not at all a scientist, care and precision. Lacking Stableford’s remarkable energy, I could not bring myself to read every word of this book, but I read a great many of the entries, following the trail left by his use of asterisks next to words that had related entries. For instance, reading the entry on biology led me to other entries on Aristotle, zoology, botany, microbiology, the microscope, chemistry, life, palaeontology, evolution, monsters, nature, J.B.S. Haldane, biotechnology, Frankenstein, horror, H.G. Wells, scientific romance, Julian Huxley, mutations, exobiology, genetics, genetic engineering, and cloning. A shorter entry, on eugenics, led to another series of entries: evolution, Darwin, intelligence, decadence, Utopia, dystopia, genetics, and biotechnology. It missed an opportunity to flag “conte philosophique,” a term used in the discussion and having its own entry.

These trails supply a remarkably thorough exploration, but the entries supply much more than a path to follow. Let the example of the entry on eugenics demonstrate the erudition of the individual entries. It begins with a discussion of Francis Galton, the nineteenth-century popularizer of the concept, and we learn that he and Darwin were cousins. Stableford goes on to contrast positive and negative eugenics, explain biometrics, connect it to Utopian and dystopian literature including satiric works, to list a number of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works using the concept, and to connect it to theories of racial supremacy, including the Nazi program. The last two paragraphs, exploring sf texts that use eugenics, contrast C.S. Lewis’s anti-scientific “slander” (168) with C.L. Moore’s more “conscientiously neutral manner” (167), and describe C.M. Kornbluth’s “striking black comedy” (168) and more contemporary examples such as “Greg Egan’s ‘Cocoon’ (1994), the film *Gattaca* (1997), and a *Star Trek* novel series on *The Eugenics Wars* (launched 2001)” (168). The range of bodies of knowledge, works, and media is impressive even in the age of Google, and the entry forms a coherent, lively essay on the topic as well as a collection of information.

I followed a number of trails of entries as I read for this review. The path leading from “Atom Bomb” demonstrated how useful the book can be in a concrete way. I had a student who wanted to write a paper on how the atom bomb

is used in science fiction, a very broad topic about which he would need to learn more, quickly, in order to narrow down the topic to something more manageable. I pointed him to Stableford's entry on the atom bomb, where he found six and a half columns of information: an historical and scientific account of its development, a discussion of early twentieth-century uses of the bomb in fiction, John W. Campbell's response to the bombing of Hiroshima, several bibliographic paragraphs discussing a wide range of texts from pulp-fiction stories to novels, analysis of works about the immediate effects of the bomb and about the post-atomic or post-holocaust subgenre of sf that Stableford calls "one of the most significant ... in the 1950s" (49). In addition, my student found discussion of various ways in which anxieties about the atom bomb are linked to those about population and pollution as well as, of course, the Cold War. The entry discusses mainstream and non-fiction responses as well as sf. Within the volume as a whole, my student could move to entries on: weapons, the atom, Einstein, Clarke, population, pollution, Sagan, alternative history, Wells, Campbell, and war (these last three missing their signifying asterisks, though). He found references throughout to a wide range of sf writers from a wide span of time, and to movies as well as the written word. Finally, he could consult the bibliography for more extended studies of the subject and look through the index. With all this information, he was able to narrow down his focus to a much more specific study about the ways in which power is abused in a story, a film, and—his own contribution—a role-playing game.

Stableford does not have entries on everything I might wish. I am working now with the connection between animal studies and science fiction, so I looked for entries on animals, ethology, and sociobiology. The first two were absent, but there was a rather short entry on sociobiology. It was accurate and suitably skeptical, calling it a "speculative science because no direct causal connection between genes and behaviour has yet been demonstrated" (486). The entry had only a few trails to follow—to Darwin, neurology, ecology, and exobiology—and mentioned only two sf stories and two explorations of the connections between sociobiology and the arts. That does not mean, however, that I found nothing useful to my own project. By looking up authors I have found central to my own research—from Stapledon to Simak to Slonczewski—in the index, I was led to very useful scientific and bibliographic information in entries on intelligence, evolution, the *conte philosophique*, and xenology. Both Stapledon and Simak have their own entries in the volume as well. A pleasant browse in the "Thematic List of Entries" led me to a number of helpful sites: Alien, Colonisation, Ecocatastrophe, Monster, Posthuman, Lamarck, Biology, Biotechnology, Ecology, Entomology, Genetics, Microbiology, Ornithology, Zoology, Eugenics, Mutation, Anthropology, Ethnology, Psychology, and Genetic Engineering. By following all these paths, I added to my stockpile of facts, bibliographic references, and stimulating ideas.

The book is not absolutely perfect, however, and here it is time to discuss its few flaws. First, I was not clear on Stableford's criteria for selecting authors to whom he devoted entries. The introduction attempts to explain, saying:

most of those individually annotated have been included because of the relevance of their work to issues in science, rather than their importance within the history of genre science fiction. Particular priority has been given to writers who are practicing scientists as well as writers of fiction, and to the links between the various aspects of their careers. (xxii)

Why then, I wondered, were Clifford Simak and Robert Silverberg present? And why was Joan Slonczewski absent? The selection seemed more idiosyncratic than logical to me. Second, I was bothered by the phallogocentric tone of the volume. The introduction uses the universal “men” rather than the more inclusive “people” which I, not being a man, but yet a person, prefer, as in the phrase quoted near the beginning of my review, “intellectual communion between scientific and literary men” (xxi). Among the entries on leading figures—Authors, Characters, Philosophers, Scientists, and Scientists/Authors—there was only one woman, Ursula K. Le Guin; no Marie Curie-Skłodowska, no Joan Slonczewski, no Donna Haraway. Although there has been much speculation on the links between gender and sex and on alternative sexuality in both science and science fiction, the entry on Sex does not go into as much detail as the large body of work on these subjects might justify. One can find some relevant leads in the index, and a great many female authors appear in individual entries, but the male bias is noticeable. Finally, as up-to-date as seems humanly possible in a work of this sort, nevertheless its mention of games is minimal (though present) and its list of websites short.

None of these objections can take away from the fact that *Science Fact and Science Fiction* is a wonderful addition to my very short list of absolutely vital sf resources, where it joins Clute and Nicholls’s *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, Neil Barron’s *Anatomy of Wonder*, and the bibliographical wormholes of *SFS*’s website. There is nothing else like it, but its presence makes clear that there should have been. It is an absolute must for any institutional library and for those of us for whom those other two volumes are vital.—**Joan Gordon, *SFS***

Two Perspectives on *Doctor Who*. John Kenneth Muir. *A Critical History of Doctor Who on Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. xii + 491 pp. \$29.95 pbk.

Marc Schuster and Tom Powers. *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy: The Discerning Fan’s Guide to DOCTOR WHO*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007. vii + 207 pp. \$35.00 pbk.

John Kenneth Muir’s book (hardcover 1999, now available in a new 2008 paperback edition) is an extensive guide to *Doctor Who* (1963-89) prior to the cancellation of the series in 1989. The book is an excellent reference for fans and scholars interested in the history of *Doctor Who*; Muir offers an introduction to the *Doctor Who* universe, an in-depth production history of the series from its inception through the 1996 Paul McGann pilot, a “Curriculum Vitae” that traces imaginative predecessors of and successors to *Doctor Who*, and an analysis of the show’s successes, its thematic concerns, its treatments of sex and gender, and its cinematography and special effects. The core of the book, however (and what makes it centrally useful as a reference volume) is an episode-by-episode guide

that includes credits, a full synopsis of each episode, and Muir's critical commentary (along with somewhat outdated notes about the episode's availability). He concludes with a survey of *Doctor Who* spinoffs (films, tv shows, radio adaptations, stage adaptations, videos, books, and comics) as well as with a survey (now very outdated) of fanzines and internet fan sites.

Muir's strength throughout the volume is his encyclopedic knowledge of sf television history and of the production history of the show itself; he offers extensive discussion of behind-the-scenes production decisions, and he can casually detail the entire careers of the most obscure supporting-cast members. For scholars interested in production history, fans captivated by juicy backstage gossip, or television enthusiasts curious about the show's background, this book will be an indispensable reference. The episode guide alone is a fan-fiction writer's dream come true.

Muir offers a "critical" history in the sense that the volume is not primarily a commercial publication intended to promote the show. It is not, however, a critical analysis of *Doctor Who* in the sense that sf scholars might hope for; Muir's episode-by-episode commentary, for example, is primarily evaluative (he offers enthusiastic assessments of the success of each episode based on production factors such as performance, cinematography, special effects, etc.). The closest he comes to what contemporary scholars would consider a critical analysis is in the "Curriculum Vitae" chapter, where he presents preliminary (and inconclusive) thoughts about how the Doctor's sense of "morality and meaning" shifts from decade to decade (57). In particular, he raises interesting questions concerning the Doctor's sense of entitlement when it comes to intervening in alien conflicts. There is much to be said, particularly in the current global context, about the imperialist and/or anti-imperialist dimensions of the Doctor's interventionist ethos in foreign affairs. Muir touches gently on this, but he draws few firm conclusions. (For a strong engagement with this topic, see Alec Charles's "War Without End?: Utopia, the Family, and the Post-9/11 World in Russell T. Davies's *Doctor Who*" in *SFS* 35.3 [Nov. 2008]).

Muir also comments on the absence of sex in *Doctor Who*, and he rightly argues that the casting of attractive (and sometimes sexily-clad) female companions represents an attempt to "exploit sex without ever exploring sex" (63). More insightfully, he also points out that many of the female companions in the show are complex and intelligent characters until they depart from the Doctor to settle down and get married: "On *Doctor Who*, the women who stay behind to marry inevitably act not as if they have succumbed to passion, lust or love. On the contrary, they act as though they have contracted a strange disease that has drained all traces of personality from them" (64).

These amusing moments aside, the volume offers little critical analysis of themes or historical contexts. It does, however, offer a vast and useful encyclopedia of the show's production history. Muir is an appreciative enthusiast, and the sheer scope of the data accumulated in this compendium makes it a must-have resource for fans and a useful tool for navigating the show's history for scholars.

Marc Schuster and Tom Powers's *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy: The Discerning Fan's Guide to DOCTOR WHO* extends beyond Muir's scope to include coverage of the new BBC *Doctor Who* (2005-) as well as the original series. The title of Schuster and Powers's book is a not-so-subtle hint at their central thesis (that *Doctor Who* is the greatest show in the galaxy), and it is also an insider's reference to the title of a classic Sylvester McCoy episode, "The Greatest Show in the Galaxy." (This was episode #155 at the conclusion of season 25, and it aired in four parts in 1988-89. I have all this data on hand due to Muir's helpful *Critical History*.)

The Greatest Show in the Galaxy is essentially an enthusiastic celebration of *Doctor Who* framed as a critical analysis. Schuster and Powers are college composition instructors, and many of the chapters exemplify the sort of writing that would be encouraged in a freshman composition classroom. Despite this, there are some suggestive close readings, and Schuster and Powers note that they deploy the trappings of critical analysis more for fun than for seriousness; Powers, for example, calls the book "a tongue-in-cheek rage against traditional academic prose" (4).

Each chapter offers a half-serious, half-playful analysis of a different aspect of *Doctor Who*. The opening chapter, "One of Us: *Doctor Who* as Cosmic Spectacle," suggests that "it is the Doctor's very showmanship that has given the recently revised series the revered place in the pantheon of science fiction it enjoys" (7). Sadly, many of the chapters suffer from similarly weak thesis arguments; key claims often begin from an observation of some characteristic of the show (such as the Doctor's "showmanship" or the show's treatment of "death"). The subsequent discussion cites examples that showcase this characteristic, and the chapter then concludes (inevitably) that this proves that *Doctor Who* is—you guessed it—the greatest show in the galaxy. For fans and supporters, this may offer an enjoyable exploration of the show's themes. For students of science fiction and popular culture, the approach is unsatisfying. The chapters are often reminiscent of paper topics that one might encounter at a fan conference; they are useful insofar as they raise the level of conversation from content to theme, but they rarely break through to insights that warrant serious academic publication.

One of the worst aspects of the book is the authors' tendency to treat the Doctor as a person rather than a character; this is most obvious in the second chapter, which "places the Doctor on the analyst's couch to determine whether he suffers from such conditions as multiple personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, repressed memory and selective amnesia" (7). Why one would ask such questions in the first place, other than to deploy psychoanalytic critique for its own sake, eludes me. The best chapter, in my view, is "Intergalactic Culture Jam: The Doctor vs. the Mega-Corporation." Here the authors read the ways in which the new *Doctor Who* offers "an extended riff on advertising, consumerism, and the entertainment industry" (119). The chapter suffers, in general, from the freshman-comp bias that everything corporate is evil, but despite this, Schuster and Powers offer compelling close readings of many of the Doctor's antagonists as allegories of corporate greed and corruption. They read

the Autons in the premiere episode of the new series, for example, as indicative of the show's resistant attitude toward mindless consumerism. Autons are plastic aliens, and "plastic is a distinctly corporate product that frequently symbolizes all that is wrong with our current culture of mass-consumption" (122). Rose Tyler, in contrast, is said to represent "the desire to live as more than just a mindless consumer" (123).

The close readings of the various villains in this chapter are provocative, and Schuster and Powers are arguably at their strongest when they read the Doctor's adventures as an "extended culture jam" designed to reclaim the public sphere "by turning the overblown ethos of mass consumption and corporate culture on its head" (9). The conclusion of the chapter, however, withdraws from more robust critical implications to offer a narrow moral: "following the Doctor's cue, we'd do best to approach these corporations—and our own relationships to them—with critical minds. We must question the meaningless drivel of the advertising industry. We must recognize the power of corporate logos and slogans to invade our minds and spread among us like viruses" (135). While there are meaningful critical claims to be leveled against consumerism under late capitalism, they are not to be found here—instead, consumer culture is a straw monster against which the Doctor struggles, and (again), the very passion of this struggle proves that *Doctor Who* is the greatest show in the galaxy.

Schuster and Powers offers an entertaining guide for "discerning fans," and in this regard, their book is a success—many fans of the series will be entertained by the readings offered here. There is another breed of "discerning fan," however, that might wish to see an analysis of the show with greater depth, historical sensitivity, and complexity than *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* has to offer. For such a fan (like myself), neither Schuster and Powers nor Muir offers a satisfying read. Muir, at least, offers a pragmatic reference tool; *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* might (at best) offer enjoyable reading selections for an undergraduate composition class.—**David Higgins, Indiana University**

More Nightmare than Dream. Mordecai Roshwald. *Dreams and Nightmares: Science and Technology in Myth and Fiction*. CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. 227 pp. \$35 pbk.

As the author of the 1950s post-apocalyptic classic, *Level 7* (1959), and as a professor emeritus of social science and humanities at the University of Minnesota, Mordecai Roshwald, one might expect, would be the perfect person to investigate the links between technology and fiction. In practice, however, Roshwald creates a rambling collection of personal reflections. His work, *Dreams and Nightmares: Science and Technology in Myth and Fiction*, as the ninth installment in the CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY series by McFarland, is certainly ambitious in its attempt to highlight the importance of science and technology in a variety of texts throughout the last two thousand years. Examining a diverse array of works from authors such as Verne, Wells, and Huxley, and moving both chronologically and thematically, Roshwald traces the use of science and technology in these texts in relation to each time period's

defining moral and philosophical stance. Thus Roshwald seeks to link these works of fiction to the public perception of science over the years.

Throughout the early chapters of the book, each use of technology or science is examined and then determined to show both the positive aspirations of humanity and the possible negative implications of the inventor's hubris in his inability to understand the far-reaching consequences of his inventions. Roshwald's exploration of the Golem myth, for example, highlights the "highest, most ambitious, dream" of humanity, as well as the "danger that the Golem will run amok, a point not to be lost in a generation weary about missiles 'escaping' their electronic controls" (38-40). In later chapters, Roshwald's focus seems to shift as he enters the twentieth century. Focusing a large amount of space and energy on a criticism of B.F. Skinner's utopia in *Walden II* (1948) as "an all too facile construction," Roshwald demonstrates his personal bias against pure utopia (123). This bias is shown strongly in his repeated praise for authors such as Orwell and Zamiatin, whom he sees as choosing to provide a warning against the misuse of technology without condemning science altogether. Roshwald's personal philosophy seems plain: we must constantly strive towards the glorious future promised by advances in technology and science, while being constantly aware of the human limitations of the inventors.

Secondary research and theory are used infrequently in this volume, and then only in the broadest of strokes as Roshwald maintains his personal vision. Roshwald's one-sided privileging of technology leaves the reader looking for the opposite view. Perhaps Roshwald's bias is best shown when he claims that the moral of E.M. Forster's story, "The Machine Stops" (1909), is that we must remember to retain our knowledge of how to fix the machine, and not that our reliance on the machine itself should be questioned (152). The goal of *Dreams and Nightmares* to examine the use of technology and science within literature and myth is admirable. The work needs to be done, but in its attempt, this book fails. While Roshwald's work points to the need for a critical reading of the presence of technology and science in myth and fiction, this volume lacks the research and focus necessary to rise to the promise the subject offers.—**Jeff Hicks, University of California, Riverside**

On Feminist SF. Maria Serena Sapegno and Laura Salvini, eds. *Figurazioni del possibile. Sulla fantascienza femminista* [Representations of the Possible. On Feminist Science Fiction]. Roma: Iacobelli, 2008. 152 pp. € 12,90 pbk.

The volume *Figurazioni del possibile. Sulla fantascienza femminista* bears witness to the fervid atmosphere of cultural and social engagement that many Italian intellectuals have recently been creating in the field of feminist studies. Particularly remarkable on this front is the work done by the *Laboratorio di studi femministi "Sguardi sulle Differenze"* [Workshop on Feminist Studies "Looking at Differences"] (<www.sguardisulledifferenze.org>), based at the Sapienza University of Rome. Founded in 2000, this group aims to establish a bridge between academic discourse on gender and feminist political activism as well as to reach out to people across diverse generations and cultural backgrounds. The annual activity of the association consists mainly in organizing a series of six

interdisciplinary seminars in which major issues of feminism are discussed, ranging from the reading of classical feminist texts to debate on new cutting-edge aspects.

This book, edited by Maria Serena Sapegno and Laura Salvini, is part of the project and collects the proceedings of the International Seminar on Feminist Science Fiction held in Rome in March 2006. The varied nature of its contributions reflects the different angles from which feminist sf is explored. As Sapegno points out in her introduction, the articles and interviews included in the collection are purposely structured in a dialogic form, which is not limited to the strictly academic approach but privileges instead an open exchange of ideas and experiences (13). Starting from the analysis of two paramount texts, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), a variety of voices and points of view intertwine: from feminist sf specialists to critics who deal with the subject for the first time and from novelists to non-fiction writers. Moreover, the international dimension encourages cross-cultural dialogue highlighting not only how the general discourse on feminism in Italy has benefitted from feminist sf, but also how these stimuli have been used by Italian women to face controversial matters such as the borderline between ethics and political control in the application of genetic engineering.

The argument oscillates between two poles: the ability of feminist sf writers to imagine utopian—or dystopian—worlds and the extent to which their narratives have an impact on our own world. On the one hand, behind the flawless façade of utopia always lurks what Sapegno calls “la trappola dell'assoluto” [the trap of the absolute] (11), which freezes all projects for a better reality into dreams of idealistic yet artificial perfection. On the other hand, the lives and writings of many feminist writers show that desire is the first step towards change, or, in other words, that theory is not disjointed from action.

A recurring name in the book is that of Octavia E. Butler. Laura Salvini pays homage to her memory in the opening article by briefly sketching her biography and career, both of which hinged on the imperative motto: persist. In the following chapter Salvini draws the boundaries of feminist sf and explains that seeing genre literature through women's eyes means primarily “comunicare attraverso il linguaggio dell'emozione” [to communicate through the language of emotion] (25). The mental as well as the emotional approach of and to texts is at the core of feminist writers' use of their creative freedom for didactic purposes.

Margaret Brose, Charlotte Ross, and Tatiana Crivelli present three different interpretations of *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Brose uses the chromatic spectrum to describe the two novels. Le Guin's book is regarded as white, or non-colored, since sexuality and maternity play only a secondary role in the narration. On the contrary, red—“il colore della *caritas* e della procreazione femminile” [the color of *caritas* and female procreation] (39)—is predominant in Atwood's novel, in which gender issues are seen through the lens of the uncanny. Ross begins with a definition of feminist sf, whose main assets are a critique of the established system and of the representation of time. She regards *The Left Hand of Darkness* as “potenzialmente più produttivo per chi

riflette sui temi dell'identità di genere e della sessualità" [potentially more productive for those who reflect upon the themes of gender identity and sexuality] (58), whereas *The Handmaid's Tale* does not envisage any feminist future remaining anchored to a heteronormative dualism. Crivelli's article combines the point of view of an expert in women's writing with that of a woman reader biased against sf. She points out the similarities between the two novels by compiling a list of common motifs: anxiety, communication/control, maternity, roles/sex/society. In her conclusion she wonders why, since male sf can be seen as a projection of man's thirst for power, feminist sf (in the two examples considered) does not perform the same liberating effect but "angoscia con rappresentazioni di oppressione" [causes anxiety through its representations of oppression] (75). Although Crivelli warns that her reading is less critical than emotional, the inclusion of her skeptical assessment of the two works in the volume matches the editors' intent, i.e., to provide an overview of the debate on feminist sf by taking into account a varied range of approaches.

The other contributors offer critical readings of several aspects of feminist sf. Anna Scacchi notices the sense of social responsibility that marked the life of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and explains the strong connection between her utopian fiction and social reform. Federico Appel tells about an editorial experiment carried out in Italy in 1906 by the editors of the magazine *Letture per la Gioventù* [Readings for Young People]. They published the first chapter of a new novel titled *Il rivale di Giove* [Jupiter's Rival] and invited the readers to continue the story. This literary competition was actually intended to verify how the public would respond to the magazine's anti-feminist ideology. Quite unexpectedly, the narrative was turned into an sf novel, since, Appel argues, this seemed to be the only framework within which the transgressive behavior of the female protagonist could be made acceptable for the social standards of the time. Eleonora Carinci underlines the importance of history in "Souls" (1982) by Joanna Russ and shows how the author uses irony in order to overturn the traditional *topos* of the battle of the sexes. In the closing article, Liana Borghi traces the evolution of feminist utopias and illustrates how technological imagery has always dominated in the alternative worlds created by women writers.

To conclude, the common thread linking together the contributions collected in *Figurazioni del possibile* is that feminist sf writers and readers look ahead positively to a future when the possible will become real. Sarah Lefanu and the Italian scholar and novelist Nicoletta Vallorani, whose interviews appear in the volume, also share this view and add that the genre hybridism characterizing contemporary feminist sf enables it to confront the coming challenges on both formal and ideological planes. Especially if considered in relation to the conservatism of Italian culture, the book is not only a valuable attempt to analyze the work of feminist writers but also to constitute a confrontational ground to discuss controversial issues at stake in contemporary society. —**Valentina Polcini, University of Exeter**

Making Things Strange. Simon Spiegel. *Die Konstitution des Wunderbaren. Zu einer Poetik des Science-Fiction-Films* [The Constitution of the Marvellous.

Towards a Poetics of the Science Fiction Film]. ZÜRCHER FILMSTUDIEN 16. Marburg: Schüren Verlag, 2007. 385 pp. €24.90 pbk.

Simon Spiegel, a Swiss free-lance film reviewer, journalist, and teacher at the Seminary of Cinematic Studies of the University of Zürich, has now published a doctoral thesis that offers not only, like so many books on sf films, a listing and plot synopses of sf films, but also a discussion of the theoretical background that makes the book a contribution to sf theory in general, a field that resembles a minefield. Spiegel does not restrict himself to films. His starting point is the written literature, and he enters into a dialogue especially with those theoreticians who have greatly influenced the discussion: that is, Darko Suvin for the theory of science fiction and Tzvetan Todorov for the theory of uncanny fantastic literature (with which European literary theoreticians are much more concerned than with other fantasy). Suvin's conception of sf as the literature of cognitive estrangement operates with terms that are highly diffuse and controversial, and claims a procedure as typical for sf, which applies in principle to any kind of literature. Contrary to Suvin, Spiegel holds that naturalization of the strange is the principal method of science fiction, not estrangement of the familiar. Equally disputed are the views of Todorov which Todorov himself has in the course of time somewhat modified or abandoned. Suvin is especially open to attack in that he refers to the masterworks of sf and excludes many other examples which, although undoubtedly science fiction, are quite different from those peak works. Spiegel does not make this mistake; he concerns himself not only with groundbreaking works of sf film but with techniques that are valid for sf cinema in general. The main theoretical points of his book have been presented succinctly in English in his piece "Things Made Strange: On the Concept of 'Estrangement' in Science Fiction Theory" (*SFS* 35.2 [July 2008]: 369-85).

His starting point is the problem of definition, since while there are numerous definitions of sf, none has met with universal acclaim. Spiegel discusses the problematic nature of the term "genre," tries to define the borders between fantasy, the marvellous, and the uncanny, considers whether science fiction might be considered a genre or a mode of writing, and traces its historical origins in the gothic novel, the scientific romance, and Gernsback's views of scientifiction. In cinema the development is from the films of Méliès, who had as yet no concept of genre and who was interested most of all to "generate effects never seen before" (92; this, and all translations from the German are my own)—something that is even today one of the main attractions of sf films. It is hardly possible to speak of an sf cinema before 1950, although there were some films with an sf modus.

The concept of the "novum" that is so central to sf is not considered in respect to real scientific possibilities but as a rhetorical figure that creates an impression of technology and scientific rigor created by an sf world that is apparently compatible with reality. The reference to the real world in sf is not greater than in pure fantasy; science fiction only appears to be more realistic. In the cinema, plausibility is easier to achieve than in literature, for it can simply show something that *looks technological*, such as the space station in *2001* (1968), and that is all that it takes. Film presents its nova in concrete objects: "The evidence

of a *photographic film image* is a decisive strength of the film: the novum doesn't remain a vague notion, it appears really as a *visible picture*. That a novum appears to be convincing depends only secondarily upon its scientific plausibility; much more important is the fact that it is visible in a concrete form" (48; emphasis in the original). On the other hand, literature has the advantage that much can be left to the imagination of the reader, who supplements hints and suggestions according to his or her abilities.

Spiegel investigates especially the act of understanding the "literal" meaning of a film, its "surface," and develops a model of viewing, investigating what the recipients make of the information transmitted, which itself depends on what knowledge they bring to the viewing and what they expect from the film. Spiegel also discusses the view that science is a modern myth.

In the second part of his book, Spiegel goes "In Search of Wonder" (121), using the title of the book by Damon Knight (1956), and puts together the building blocks for a poetics of the sf film: he considers possible and impossible worlds of wonder, the worlds of science fiction and how they are narrated, "important images" (177) in sf film, and the relationship of metaphor and cognition. In his opinion, science fiction is a "a realistic irreality" (197) and he investigates how the effect of strangeness and the alien are achieved in sf films, often by the use of "alien sounds" (229).

Spiegel also explores the "conceptual breakthrough" (246) to a new paradigm, story twists, and the philosophical question that is asked again and again, in literature as in films: what is the nature of humanity? He discusses the sublime and the grotesque, the pleasure of being frightened, what he calls the "pleasurable non-pleasure" (281), Big Dumb Objects, "effective spectacles" (301) in the cinema of attractions and special effects, and, lastly, digital worlds.

The book offers a voluminous bibliography of primary literature, reference works, and secondary sources, an index and a filmography, and is accompanied by a DVD with scenes from films.

Although the book focuses on the formal properties of the medium of the sf film in general, it is also of great value as a theoretical text on written sf, for the author considers nearly all important works on the theory of science fiction, especially European works on the fantastic, weighing the various concepts and forming them into a syncretic picture. In particular, he bases his discussion on Samuel R. Delany's work, who is of the opinion that sf is characterized by a radical literalness and requires a particular attitude of the reader. Spiegel does not wholly agree with him, and shows that Delany sometimes claims something to be specific for sf which is also to be found in other literature. Spiegel's book is one of the rare studies in German that concerns itself with problems of narratology and observes an affinity of sf to traditional storytelling. This affinity is not so prominent as in supernatural horror, which can only be told in a traditional form, but which nevertheless allows a broader spectrum of narrative strategies (as in the New Wave, which aimed, however, at not only a formal but also a conceptual innovation). The domination of conventional story devices in the sf cinema is owed not only to a consideration of market strategies, but also to those factors inherent in the form.

The reader will find in the book a wealth of stimulating ideas brought into a consistent and convincing whole; it is an important contribution not only to film theory, but to sf theory in general.—**Franz Rottensteiner, Vienna**

Quote Unquote. Gary Westfahl. *Science Fiction Quotations: From the Inner Mind to the Outer Limits*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. xxi + 461pp. \$28.00 pbk.

Since the year 2000 or so, there have been a number of very good and very broad reference works concerning sf. Increasingly substantial “companions” came from Oxford, Blackwell, and Routledge. Brian Stableford produced an encyclopedia of sf fact and fiction (see review in this issue). Oxford offered up an sf lexicon. John Clute has promised a revised and updated version of his and Peter Nicholls’s extraordinary encyclopedia, this version to be available on-line. Recently, Robin Anne Reid supplied a two-volume *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy* (2009), a welcome complement to Gary Westfahl’s 2005 *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, which in three volumes provides a substantial and compelling catalog of the most canonical themes, topics, and texts within the genres of the fantastic.

Westfahl has now produced a curiously worthy book of quotations, mostly drawn from sf but supplemented by a few from fantasy. Working in a long tradition initiated by books such as *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations* (the first edition dates from 1855), *Science Fiction Quotations: From the Inner Mind to the Outer Limits* lists almost 3000 passages from sf fiction, film, and television, ranging from the era of proto-sf through the early pulps to very recent texts, such as the film *X2: X-Men United* (2003). Westfahl also includes passages from sf scholarship. Humanity, Death, Knowledge, the Universe, and, not unsurprisingly, Science Fiction are the five categories with the greatest number of entries among the 130 alphabetically-arranged topics. Most of the classes are common terms—Aliens, Computers, Nature, Utopia—and none is at all exotic. Only one (Surrealism) seems odd, though Westfahl uses that rubric to catalog “science fiction’s noted ability to generate, due to its innovative subject matter, statements that are delightfully absurd or incongruous” (xx).

Bartlett, like many other quotation lists, is arranged by author, but most web-based quotation pages now make searching by topic the default option. In order to assist readers to track familiar favorites, Westfahl offers a helpful index of titles and authors. The most quotations come from Kim Stanley Robinson’s 1992 *Red Mars* (37), and the author quoted most often is Robert A. Heinlein (171), followed closely by Ursula K. Le Guin, and the rest of the usual suspects—Dick, Pratchett, Gibson, Adams, and Clarke. Indeed, while most of the names and texts are familiar (in Bartlett’s sense), there are a few oddities and surprises, such as the 17 quotations from Norton Juster’s delightful *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961), although there are only 11 from Lewis Carroll, Juster’s literary godfather. (Lists of the top entries were provided to the SFRA conference in the summer of 2005, and are recorded on *The World of Westfahl*, at <http://www.sfsite.com/gary/ww-quotations01.htm>; at the same site, you can also hear a 60-minute interview concerning the book.) Most of the quotations are twenty to forty words. The longest I counted was a whopping 164 words, from the category “Humanity” and

written by Spider and Jeanne Robinson in “Stardance,” a novella from 1977 (173). The shortest I noted was just four words—“The king was pregnant” (363)—a phrase so familiar that, like “the door dilated” (361) or “Ninety percent of *everything* is crud” (219), most of us do not need it identified.

In his six-page editorial introduction, Westfahl outlines his editorial practice: “I resolved to locate and reproduce definitive texts for all quotations” (xvi). Indeed, Westfahl’s insistence on accuracy and fidelity means that he left out many passages he could not verify. He rigorously sought out these sources and then transcribed original versions from first book publication (original or in English translation), from the best scholarly edition available, from the first magazine publication, or from direct transcription of tv and film dialog. I believe him. In the few instances where I thought a passage might contain a slight misquotation and so checked sources, Westfahl was accurate.

His criteria for inclusion, however, are more obscure. Pith and wit appear less compelling to Westfahl than does topic, though no doubt he strove to feature the famous, the insightful, and the nuanced. What a daunting task, to cull from the sf megatext all that is pithy and worth reciting! But far too many of these passages remain astonishingly pedestrian—dull or witless, flat or un-insightful, such as “The best way of handling pain was to study it objectively” (Arthur C. Clarke, 266). Others are simply vacuous, such as “Who is true will breed true” (Doris Pitkin Buck, 383). And there is also what I take to be an unhealthy interest in the telescripts of J. Michael Straczynski. But even if very few of the quotations are so witty as to be memorable, and if only a very small percentage are the recognizable keystones of the genre, Westfahl has provided us with an excellent storehouse, both for browsing and for fishing. Scholars will find much that is apt and much that is suggestive; lay readers will find the collection both informative and generally entertaining.

The genesis of the book was an invitation from Yale’s Fred Shapiro for a volume to complement the publication of *The Yale Book of Quotations* (2006), which consists primarily of modern American quotations, especially those with extra-literary origins. As Westfahl says in his introduction, he was eager to take up the task, no matter how intimidating and difficult it would be (xv). Because, as Westfahl acknowledges, there is simply too much material to mine and glean all the relevant bits of sf wisdom (xx-xxi), *Science Fiction Quotations* reads as a sort of commonplace book, a record of Westfahl’s wide reading and engaging intellect. This book, surely the first edition of a series that will remain a valuable contribution to the reference collection in sf studies, is highly recommended for all university and public libraries.—Neil Easterbrook, TCU

BOOKS RECEIVED

Critical Studies

- Bould, Mark, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2009. xxii + 554 pp. \$150 hc.
- Clute, John. *Canary Fever: Reviews*. John Clute. Harold Wood, UK: Becon, 2009. xii + 415 pp. £16.00 pbk.
- Kelso, Sylvia. *Three Observations and a Dialogue: Round and About SF*. CONVERSATION PIECES V. 24. Seattle, WA: Aquaduct, 2009. 122pp. \$12 pbk.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. *Cheek by Jowl: Talks and Essays on How and Why Fantasy Matters*. Seattle, WA: Aquaduct, 2009. 149 pp. \$16 pbk.
- Mendlesohn, Farah. *The Intergalactic Playground: A Critical Study of Children's and Teens' Science Fiction*. CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY 14. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. ix + 273 pp. \$45 pbk.
- Pearson, Wendy, Veronica Hollinger, and Joan Gordon. *Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction*. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool UP, 2008. xii + 285 pp. \$85 hc.
- Ransom, Amy J. *Science Fiction From Quebec: A Postcolonial Study*. CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY 15. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. 265 pp. \$39.95 pbk.
- Ruddick, Nicholas. *The Fire in the Stone: Prehistoric Fiction from Charles Darwin to Jean M. Auel*. EARLY CLASSICS OF SCIENCE FICTION. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2009. xviii + 265 pp. \$35 hc.
- Westfahl, Gary, and George Slusser. *Science Fiction and the Two Cultures: Essays on Bridging the Gap Between the Sciences and the Humanities*. CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY 16. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. viii + 282 pp. \$35 pbk.

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- [Donaldson] Barkley, Christine. *Stephen R. Donaldson and the Modern Epic Vision: A Critical Study of the "Chronicles of Thomas Covenant" Novels*. CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY 17. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. ix + 213 pp. \$35 pbk.
- [Lovecraft] Faig, Kenneth W., Jr. *The Unknown Lovecraft*. New York: Hippocampus P, 2009. 255 pp. \$20 pbk.
- [Robinson] Burling, William J., ed. *Kim Stanley Robinson Maps the Unimaginable: Critical Essays*. CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY 13. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. 303 pp. \$45 pbk.
- [Russ] Mendlesohn, Farah, ed. *On Joanna Russ*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2009. ix + 285 pp. \$29.95 pbk.
- [Shelley] Audrey A. Fisch. *Frankenstein*. ICONS OF MODERN CULTURE. Westfield, UK: Helm Information, 2009. xiii + 306 pp. £38 hc.
- [Vonnegut] Klinkowitz, Jerome. *Kurt Vonnegut's America*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2009. x + 142 pp. \$34.95 hc.

Media Studies

Geraghty, Lincoln, ed. *Channeling the Future: Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow P, 2009. xviii + 235 pp. \$45 hc.

Significant Reprints

Delany, Samuel R. *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*. Rev. Ed. Intro. Matthew Cheney. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2009. xxx + 254 pp. \$27.95 pbk.

Rottensteiner, Franz, ed. *The Black Mirror and Other Stories: An Anthology of Science Fiction from Germany and Austria*. Trans. Mike Mitchell. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2008. xxxix + 377 pp. \$85 hc; \$27.95 pbk.

Related Critical Studies

Allen Glen Scott. *Images of the American Scientist as Hero and Villian from Colonial Times to the Present*. Amherst, MA: U Massachusetts P, 2009. ix + 305 pp. \$98 hc; \$29.95 pbk.

Brock, Marilyn, ed. *From Wollstonecraft to Stoker: Essays on Gothic and Victorian Sensation Fiction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. viii + 212 pp. \$35 pbk.

NOTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

Bisexuality in New Wave SF. Doing research for my July 2006 *SFS* article on “Sextrapolation in New Wave SF” (recently reprinted in the anthology *Queer Universes*, reviewed in this issue), I was surprised to discover, given all the taboo-shattering experiments with controversial content launched during the 1960s and 1970s, a relative lack of affirmative depictions of bisexuality in New Wave fiction. The rare bisexual characters that appear in New Wave texts are usually deployed as comic figures, or else designed to shock in stereotypical ways; and few attempts were made to extrapolate future or alien worlds based on bisexuality—by contrast, say, with lesbianism or non-monogamous sexual practices.¹ This is particularly surprising in that bisexuality would seem to pose one of the most pointed challenges to prevailing sexual paradigms, especially those linking erotic desire with gender identity, and the movement’s authors were, if nothing else, quite willing to scandalize reigning orthodoxies. Their silence in this regard is telling, reflecting a lacuna within both sexuality studies scholarship and the history of modern sexual politics.

As transgender activist Kate Bornstein puts it, bisexuality runs counter to “the dominant cultural binary of sexual orientation: heterosexuality/homosexuality”—a binary that, as she points out, both straights and gays are invested in maintaining. “[A]ll these models,” she goes on to assert, “depend on the gender of the partner. This results in minimizing, if not completely dismissing, other dynamic models of relationship which could be more important than gender and are often more telling about the real nature of someone’s desire” (33; emphasis in original).² Bisexual advocate Jane Litwoman claims to be unable even to imagine basing sexual attraction on her partner’s genital makeup, preferring instead less gender-specific factors such as intelligence or eccentricity; she feels as a result “color blind or tone deaf to a gender-erotic world” (qtd. in Hutchins and Kaahumanu 5). As David Allyn argues (in terms that converge with the extrapolative perspectives of science fiction), “[w]e are reluctant to accept bisexuality as an identity because it does not serve as a predictor of the future based on the past. Indeed, bisexuality is not an identity at all, it is a statement of possibility” (219).

Theoretical sanction for such erotic openness has been provided by none other than Sigmund Freud, whose model of the psyche assumes a constitutive bisexuality at the core of libido:

psycho-analysis considers that a choice of an object independently of its sex—freedom to range equally over male and female objects—as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history, is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop. Thus from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating.... (11-12)

Heterosexuality is, just like homosexuality, the contingent outcome of a fluid developmental process rather than a fixed or pre-given form of identity. As Freud’s language of “normal” versus “inverted” types suggests, the psychoanalyst

would obviously *prefer* a heterosexual outcome, thus mandating therapeutic intervention when individuals stray from this path. Yet despite its conservative bias in practice, his theory is actually quite radical in its anti-essentialist standpoint.³

Of course, a general rebellion *against* Freud (or against the reactionary version of Freud characteristic of postwar psychoanalysis, especially in the US) marked a large part of the sexual culture of the 1960s. Feminists attacked his latent misogyny and masculinist bias, proponents of gay rights scorned his heterosexism, and counterculture advocates mocked his defense of erotic sublimation as necessary to civilized life. Moreover, the rampant identity politics of the period made it unlikely that any theoretical model challenging the fixity of gender or sexual orientation would find much purchase. To lesbian feminists and gay male activists alike, bisexuals seemed almost like traitors to the cause—secretly harboring, in the words of Paula Rust, “political allegiances to the heterosexual majority” (475). Carl Wittman, author of “Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto” (1970), was one of the few gay pride militants to offer positive words about bisexuality, endorsing Freud’s vision of an innately “undefined” erotic instinct and affirming “the capacity to love people of either sex” (158-59). Yet the fraught sexual politics of the era seemed to make this possibility into a distant utopian prospect at best: “Gays will begin to get turned on to women when 1) it is something that we do because we want to, and not because we should; 2) when women’s liberation has changed the nature of heterosexual relationships” (159). In other words, for the time being, any move in a bisexual direction had to be seen as potentially reactionary, shoring up a hegemonic (hetero)sexist social order.⁴

New Wave fiction was produced within this cultural matrix, so it is unsurprising that it should reflect the period’s endemic blind spots and polemical tendencies. The controversy that emerged around Ursula K. Le Guin’s depiction of her “bisexual” Gethenians in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) is instructive in this regard. By “bisexual,” Le Guin did not mean what we commonly take the term to imply, but rather that the inhabitants of her planet Gethen could assume either the male or female role in reproduction during the period of “kemmer”—thus, “bigendered” would have been a more accurate term. As far as specifically erotic behavior is concerned, the novel makes clear that heterosexual pairing is entirely dominant: if there are “kemmer-partners of the same sex, they are so rare as to be ignored” (90). Feminist and gay commentators at the time criticized the book for its default masculinism and heterosexism, charges Le Guin herself eventually accepted as not without merit.⁵ Lost in the entire debate, however, were the truly destabilizing implications of Le Guin’s ambi-gendered world for normative assumptions about erotic desire and attraction, since for the vast majority of their lives, Gethenians interact intimately and form lasting bonds based not on the structure of their genitals (which alternate with each kemmer cycle) but on less palpable aspects of temperament or personality. For all the attention it has drawn from critics, we are still awaiting a truly *bisexual* reading of this celebrated novel.⁶

Yet Le Guin's scanting of the topic is much to be preferred to the way some other authors used bisexual characters for cheap laughs or shock effects.⁷ Brian N. Ball's *Planet Probability* (1973), for instance, features a "a slim handsome bisexual" named Dyson, whose "boyish mannerisms" seem a kind of "witless affectation" (7-8) and whose main narrative function is to swish around and clap his hands enthusiastically at the prospect of "total-reality simulation" (the novel's main theme). In short, his bisexuality is purely nominal and he occupies the sort of role usually reserved for the stock comic faggot. Harry Harrison's pastiche-cum-parody of classic space opera, *Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers* (1973), concludes with the novel's two heroes embracing and kissing enthusiastically under the doting eyes of their erstwhile girlfriend: "'that's all right,' Sally said, smiling with understanding. 'I've known for a long time that you both were AC-DC, and I was waiting for you to make your mind up which way you were finally going to jump'" (188). Her bemused tolerance is, however, undercut by the underlying narrative thrust of this revelation: to expose the macho pretensions of the traditional space-cadet/scientist as a laughable sham. This sort of cute ironic twist is also deployed in a more serious work from the period, Robert Silverberg's Nebula-winning short story "Passengers" (1969), which uses an invasion of alien parasites as an allegory of Sixties-era casual sex. These creatures—known as "Riders"—take an obscure pleasure in forcing humans to debase themselves in meaningless acts of pseudo-intimacy with total strangers; when the male protagonist and a young woman come close to establishing a genuine connection, he is abruptly seized by one of the Riders and compelled to hook up instead with a young man with smooth cheeks and pomaded hair. Cue the gasps of readerly astonishment.⁸

Not all New Wave stories tackled the topic of bisexuality so superficially. Silverberg himself offered sophisticated speculations on the subject in other works, such as his 1971 fix-up novel *The World Inside*, where the dwellers in a vast high-rise routinely vary the genders of their partners in a leisurely roundelay. The author makes clear, however, that this seeming freedom is little more than vacuous "lifestyle," with the characters smugly congratulating themselves on their open-mindedness even as they ignore the general impoverishment of spiritual life in their dismal urban hive.⁹ While most of his treatments of sexual diversity are colored by this cynical view of the empty hedonism of such "liberated" options, Silverberg deserves credit for his forthright explorations in this area, including his depiction of some of the most believable and sympathetic gay characters in the New Wave canon.¹⁰ His other novel from 1971, *Son of Man*, projects its vaguely macho protagonist, Clay, into a kaleidoscopic far future, where he consorts with the glamorously indolent Skimmers, sleek creatures who can switch sex at will and who compel Clay to come to grips with the psychic limits of his own erotic instincts. It must be admitted, however, that the deeper implications of bisexuality tend to get lost amid the many delirious role-reversals and protean transformations of identity the novel chronicles—a problem that besets another time-traveling extravaganza of sexual confusion, David Gerrold's *The Man Who Folded Himself* (1973).

This theme of gender-bending aliens inspiring bisexual dabblings among counterculturally-inclined youth was also taken up by James Tiptree, Jr. (a.k.a. Alice Sheldon) in her 1972 story "All the Kinds of Yes," which literalizes the notion of first *contact* in an orgiastic scene featuring four hippies and a randy ET.¹¹ "Oh, Gandalf," one of the hippies cries. "Earth's greatest day. I'm living it. The first alien contact. Me. You too... Us. The first" (13). The alien also seems deeply moved by the encounter: "'I had no idea it was so beautiful—the two kinds and all the—all *you*—' He choked up, patting blindly at them all" (19; emphasis in original). It is hard to know how seriously readers are meant to take this sappy, trippy sequence—and, of course, by the time the story was published, bisexual alien chic had gone mainstream in the form of David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. With tracks like "Starman" and "Moonage Daydream," this 1972 concept album remains one of the greatest works of pop sf, though the full nature and scope of its influence on the genre has never been critically examined.¹² The youth counterculture certainly began to adopt the messianic postures of Bowie's starlost superman, with such self-proclaimed "metasexuals" as Marco Vassi launching manifestoes whose rhetoric of feverish metamorphosis had a strong science-fictional flavor: "At the far edge of bisexuality I realized that all that had gone before was but the task of perfecting the instrument, the mindbody that is myself" (qtd. in Heidenry 146).

Vassi's extraordinary 1973 memoir, *The Stoned Apocalypse*, is worth reading alongside Samuel R. Delany's *The Motion of Light in Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village* (1988) as evidence of how readily urban-bohemian eroticism during the 1960s could edge into (implicitly or explicitly) science-fictional scenarios. For Delany, the connection was quite direct, a matter of extrapolation from first-hand knowledge: his membership in a bisexual commune, chronicled in his 1979 book *Heavenly Breakfast*, was clearly the impetus for the sundry forms of intimate bonding depicted in his fiction, such as the triune partnerships in *Babel-17* (1966) and the communal marriage in "The Star Pit" (1967). Virtually alone among New Wave writers, Delany shows how these unconventional modes of human companionship might become socially essential, the foundation for future custom and collectivity.¹³ In *Babel-17*, for instance, starship navigators *must* be "tripled"—i.e., linked in a three-way, bi-gendered sexual-economic partnership—to do their jobs effectively. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his personal background, no other sf writer conveys so convincing a sense of the lived experience of bisexuality, to the point that such behavior loses whatever exoticism it may possess in the present day and becomes an all-but-mundane future reality. Among its many other accomplishments, his 1975 novel *Dhalgren* is the genre's first, and so far only, bisexual epic.

For most other New Wave writers, bisexuality was largely indistinguishable from homosexuality in the sense that both were colorful and kinky new topics for the genre, especially useful for making ironic commentaries on heteronormativity. The comic-horrific charge of several of Barry N. Malzberg's tales of gay-dominated futures—such as "Culture Lock" (1973) and *The Sodom and Gomorrah Business* (1974)—derives from the effects of shifting margin to center. In these worlds, bisexuals are doubly strange, objects of scorn and suspicion for

both the gay authorities and the heterosexual minority.¹⁴ Although it is a considerably more seriously-purposed work, Joanna Russ's "When It Changed" (1972) shows a similar pattern, especially in the narrator's lingering anxiety that her daughter, reared in a lesbian utopia, might secretly harbor an attraction for the earthmen newly arrived in their midst. Even Thomas M. Disch's densely imagined novel *334* (1974) tends to view bisexuality as at best a droll footnote to the hetero-homo battles that, in his near future, have largely run their course. In other words, many New Wave authors treated bisexuality as little more than an opaque marker of position in the presumably more fundamental sexual-political conflict between straight and gay worlds—a situation many bisexual activists have decried in reality.¹⁵

What all this suggests is that, even for the most sexually forthright work ever produced within the genre, bisexuality remained something of an enigma or an absent presence. This is perhaps unsurprising since, as Maria Pramaggiore has pointed out, the "continual construction and deconstruction of the desiring subject" that bisexuality highlights—and celebrates—can only be perplexing, not to mention vexing, to a culture that embraces "restrictive formulas that define gender according to binary categories, that associate one gender or one sexuality with a singularly gendered object choice, and that equate sexual practices with sexual identity" (3). Even the considerable imaginative resources of New Wave sf found it difficult to grapple with this mysterious *novum*—though at least some authors made hesitant attempts at experimental engagement and, in the case of Delany, a kind of personal testimony garbed as future world-building. Were it not for these pioneering efforts, we probably would not now have more full-throated work by the likes of Melissa Scott and Candas Jane Dorsey, and certainly not the James Tiptree, Jr. Award to spur further dimensions of speculation in the realms of gender and sexuality. As that award's conspectus affirms, what the genre needs is not work that "falls into some narrow definition of political correctness, but rather ... that is thought-provoking, imaginative, and perhaps even infuriating."¹⁶ That final triumvirate of adjectives offers a fitting summary not only of the challenges posed by the best sf, but also of bisexuality itself, to normative definitions of desire and selfhood.—**Rob Latham, SFS**

NOTES

1. An exception is the 1976 non-genre sf novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy, which projects an imagined world—the rural utopia Mattapoisett—where sexual intimacies are not based on gendered object-choice but on free-flowing, polymorphous desire. The resulting community might best be described as pansexual rather than bisexual *per se*.

2. Klein offers an excellent analysis of how bisexuality poses insuperable difficulties for "bipolar" models of sexual orientation; he advocates instead a model based on sexual *interests*, claiming they are more responsive to the existing variety of sexual tastes and practices than is the hetero/homo dichotomy (see especially Chapter Two, 39-70). A popular version of this sort of argument has been provided by Garber.

3. For a discussion of how Freud's constitutive bisexuality was scrapped by subsequent generations of psychoanalysts in favor of a more rigid heteronormative model, see Weeks (150). For an overview of the ways bisexuality has been theorized, from the

early sexological writings of Freud and Havelock Ellis up to the present, see the wealth of materials gathered in Storr.

4. It has only been with the advent of a more amorphously “queer” theory/politics in recent decades that bisexuality has come to be seen as less obviously suspect; see, for instance, the discussion in Jagose (69-70). For a historical analysis of this transition, see Angelides (especially 162-89).

5. For a critique of the novel along these lines, see Russ (214-17). After initially responding defensively, Le Guin to her credit came to concede that her critics had a point: see Le Guin, “Is Gender Necessary? (Redux).”

6. Le Guin did attempt, in *The Dispossessed* (1974), to depict a bisexual character: her protagonist Shevek, at least in his youth, had love affairs with both men and women; but as Delany has pointed out, a sense for the psychological *texture* of such experience is sorely lacking in the novel (234-35).

7. My goal, in the observations that follow, is not to offer an exhaustive overview of bisexual themes in sf, or even in New Wave fiction, but rather to begin to suggest a critical anatomy of the ways sf has engaged with the concept and experience of bisexuality. Further elaboration in this area by sf critics, especially those working in other periods, would obviously be most welcome. Some critical and bio-bibliographical work *has* been done on the topic, though not much: see Reid, Rochelle, and Somogyi. By contrast with the extensive coverage of *gender* ambiguity in sf—such as the superb chapter on androgyny in Attebery (129-50)—this silence on specifically *erotic* ambivalence is striking.

8. Despite its rather too-clever ending, there is much about Silverberg’s story to admire, especially its sharp satire of the callous, self-justifying hedonism of the male “swinger.”

9. A similar vision of aimless dissipation, which includes some flirtation with bisexuality, can be found in Tanith Lee’s FOUR-BEE series, which includes *Don’t Bite the Sun* (1976) and *Drinking Sapphire Wine* (1977). Michael Moorcock’s JERRY CORNELIUS stories give a somewhat more positive take on youthful decadence, with his eponymous rake of a hero being affably flexible in his erotic dalliances—though this propensity is merely one facet of a fantastic polymorphousness that includes the ability to change skin color as well.

10. See especially *The Book of Skulls* (1972), probably Silverberg’s finest novel.

11. A twist on this scenario is provided by Thomas M. Disch in his 1973 story “Apollo,” wherein the eponymous god materializes in contemporary Greenwich Village and frolics with an array of bohemian youths of both genders.

12. King’s essay makes a modest start. I discuss Bowie’s “mutant trickster” Ziggy Stardust in the context of the ambivalent utopianism of the youth counterculture in my *Consuming Youth* (119-23).

13. Gregory Benford’s *In the Ocean of Night* (1977) also depicts a triune partnership linking his scientist-hero with two women who are themselves lovers; however, such relationships are not presented as a central feature of his near-future world. I think it is fair to say that the growing sexual frankness of traditional hard sf during the 1970s and early 1980s—in the work of Benford, Joe Haldeman, and John Varley, for instance—came as a result of New Wave experiments.

14. These works by Malzberg build on Charles Beaumont’s 1955 story, “The Crooked Man,” which depicts a sexually upside-down world in which heterosexuals are stigmatized and homosexuals reign supreme. For a discussion of this story in the context of the genre’s evolving treatment of gay themes, see my “Worlds Well Lost.”

15. See the essays gathered in Hutchins and Kaahumanu. A good discussion of the complexities bisexuals encounter in negotiating the politics of the gay-straight divide can be found in Baumgardner.

16. Consult the Tiptree Award website at <<http://www.tiptree.org/>>.

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Soft-core's Halcyon Days: A Longish Note on Vintage Sleaze and SF. Some of sf's iconic masters earned money writing soft-core erotica during the paperback's salad days of the 1950s-60s, when novels were printed in the hundreds of thousands for the national newsstand market, a distribution outlet that mass-market paperbacks have not enjoyed since. Midwood, Lancer, Pyramid, Lion, Bedstand, Beacon, Softcover Library, and the many Greenleaf/Corinth reprints from William Hamling (including Nightstand, Idle Hour, Midnight Reader, Leisure, Sundown Reader, and Companion Books), as well as a number of short-lived companies such as Magnet Books, are well known in the paperback fan and collector market. Lisa Morgan's "Smart Broads and Tough Guys: The Strange World of Vintage Paperbacks" notes that by the late 1950s paperback originals were firmly established and many writers dipped their toes in the water courtesy of pseudonyms, usually employed for "sleaze" or soft-core porn novels. One of the most sought-after vintage paperbacks now is *Sex Gang: Violent Stories of Naked Passion* (1958), credited to one Paul Merchant—who was actually Harlan Ellison. Donald Westlake was only one of several authors who wrote sleaze novels for the "Midnight Reader" series under the name Alan Marshall. Robert Silverberg used Don Elliott, and even horror-master Dennis Etchison got into the swing with a late 1960s porn novel credited to "Ben Dover."

Whether it is myth or hyperbole surrounding Ellison's public appearances at conventions, I have been told by several people that Ellison has ripped up copies of *Sex Gang* that have been presented to him by fans for an autograph, which certainly calls into question legal issues of destruction of valuable personal property. On the other hand, a collector showed me a copy that Ellison signed as "D.S. Merchant"; he said that Ellison seemed in good spirits and didn't mind, although he did indicate that on a different day, he "might" destroy it. Ellison wanted to use the pen name D.S. Merchant (for "Dirty Sex Merchant"), but publisher William Hamling did not approve. Some of the eleven stories in the volume originally appeared in *Gent*, *Dude*, *Rogue*, *Adam*, and other second-tier men's magazines under the pen names Sley Harson, Landon Ellis, Derry Tiger, and Price Curtis; among other pen names that Ellison has used are Ellis Hart, Jay Solo, John Doyle, and the infamous Cordwainer Bird.¹ Pen names were used to

sign genre works deemed unworthy of a writer's real name, and also because one writer under different names could pen the bulk of stories and articles in a magazine. Robert Silverberg, for example, wrote entire issues of Hamling's magazine *Imagination*, as did Ellison; sometimes the two worked together. This was done because not enough publishable stories were coming in from freelance writers; besides, tested writers were consistently professional and would not require much editing and the publisher could make a bulk story deal, getting an issue's worth for a bargain price from writers who desperately needed the cash.

Ellison claims he put *Sex Gang* together "for a schlock publisher because I needed the money."² The back cover reads: "A smoldering collection of modern stories mirroring the lust, lives and tempestuous love affairs of woman-hungry men and ... MAN-HUNGRY women!"³ The stories include "Sex Gang" (originally published in *Cad*); "The Girl with the Horizontal Mind" (originally "The Gal with the Horizontal Mind" by Price Curtis in *Mermaid*); "Wanted: Two Trollops" (original to book); "The Ugly Virgin (originally "God Bless the Ugly Virgin" in *Dude*); "Sin Time" (originally "The Silence of Infidelity" in *Caper*); "The Pied Piper of Sex" (originally "The Pied Piper of Love" in *Knave*); "Bayou Sex Cat" (originally "A Blue Note for Bayou Betty" by Derry Tiger in *Mermaid*); "The Lady Had Zilch" (originally published in *Adam*); "Girl with the Bedroom Eyes" (originally "Jeanie with the Bedroom Eyes" in *Rogue*); "The Lustful One" (originally "The Hungry One" in *Gent*); and "Bohemia for Christie" (originally "The Bohemia of Arthur Archer" in *Dude*). Currently, the two printings by Nightstand Books range in price from \$900-1200 on the collectors' market and the Greenleaf Classics reprint is worth \$400-500. The stories are not horrible. They resemble vintage Ellison such as *Love Ain't Nothing But Sex Misspelled* (1968) or *Gentleman Junkie* (1961). "The Lustful One" was re-titled "Nedra at f:5.6" in Ellison's *No Doors, No Windows* (1975). Ellison has been open about his days as a men's magazine and pulp magazine writer, typing up to 10,000 words a day to make ends meet at a penny a word, as did many other writers, including Ellison's lifelong friend, Robert Silverberg.

Soft-core novels kept a number of genre writers financially afloat. Evan Hunter (also known as Ed McBain) wrote as Dean Hudson; Marion Zimmer Bradley as Brian Morley, Dee O'Brien, Marlene Longman, Morgan Ives, John Dexter, and Miriam Gardner; Robert Silverberg as Don Elliott, Loren Beauchamp, David Challon, John Dexter, V.S. Clark, and Mark Ryan. Don Elliott is his best-known pen name and was a favorite among sleaze paperback fans, most likely because these books were quite well-written, given the quality of most of the literature on the newsstands. John Dexter, J.X. Williams, and Andrew Shaw (originally Lawrence Block's pen name) were house names, but only Silverberg wrote as Don Elliott, except for one title that he delegated to a ghost-writer when he could not meet a deadline. (Silverberg does not recall which title this was.) As with *Sex Gang*, the Elliott books are not bad, albeit riddled with typos and awkward grammar, more the copy-editor's and typesetter's mistakes than the writer's. Silverberg's early style, found also in his 1950s and 1960s sf, is evident in such titles as *Gang Girl* (1959), *Roadhouse Girl* (1963), *Expense Account Sinners* (1961), *Sin Servant* (1962), and *Sixteen* (1962):

He was a college professor. That was all right. Lonnie didn't mind that. Her own father was a college professor. That was how Ted Rourke had happened to come live with them in the first place.

Ted Rourke was a professor of comparative literature at the college in Illinois. Lonnie's father, Roy Clark, was a professor of comparative literature at Hazeline College in Farnsworth, Massachusetts.... And when the regular semester ended the first week of June, Ted Rourke came east to spend the summer with the Clark family. He and Professor Clark were going to collaborate on a book. (*Sixteen* 17)

The set-up here is obvious and common: the young professor succumbing to the flesh of precocious girls, students or otherwise. Silverberg explored the psychology of desire; consider the opening of *Sin Servant*: "I don't know why it is I like to hurt people. I just do. Especially women. It's the kind of guy I am, that's all, and I don't try to make excuses for it" (5). In *Roadhouse Girl* (1963), Silverberg offers commentary on the socio-economics of the era: "You work hard for your money here, she thought. You started at six o'clock and you worked four hours straight without so much a coffee break. Then they gave you an hour and a half off, from ten to half past eleven. Then it was back to duty until four in the morning ... eight and a half hours on your feet" (5). The sex scenes in these books were by today's standards PG-13 because of the strict obscenity laws of an era in which Lenny Bruce was arrested for saying "Fuck" onstage. There were no dirty words, no cussing, and no graphic description of genitals, although breasts were often described as "fleshy globes" or "mounds." The writers used euphemisms and metaphors: arousal was a "fire in the loins," and orgasm was "fulfillment," and characters said "Love me" when they wanted sex. In *Convention Girl*, Silverberg employs dialogue to describe foreplay in a scene reminiscent of the sex-against-a-tree scene in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), a scene also conveyed by dialogue and hints that may have influenced this scene in Silverberg:

"There. That's better, isn't it?" she asked.

"Lots better."

"Stay still. Don't move."

"Okay."

"Hold me here."

"You like that, do you?"

"Very, very much," she said. "That's right," she said a moment later.

"Slowly. Don't rush it. Slow. Keep doing it that way. Yes, Dan. Yes, that's it. Just like that."

"I love you."

"I love you too, Dan. Here. Hold me."

"Lift up a little."

"Okay?"

"Okay." (36)

In his essay "My Life as a Pornographer," Silverberg reminisced that

I was 24 years old when I stumbled, much to my surprise, into a career of writing sex novels. In 1958, as a result of a behind-the-scenes convulsion in the magazine-distribution business, the whole SF publishing world went belly up.

A dozen or so magazines for which I had been writing regularly ceased publication overnight; and as for the tiny market for SF novels ... it suddenly became so tight that unless you were one of the first-magnitude stars like Robert Heinlein or Isaac Asimov you were out of luck. (Daley 12)

He writes that he could produce a soft-core novel for Hamling or others in six days, working in the morning to write an 18-page chapter, taking a lunch break, then writing another chapter in the afternoon. (In the evenings he would switch to writing sf and non-fiction.) By the sixth day, he had twelve to fourteen chapters, 212 pages in typescript—all the Hamling books were 190-192 pages—and would send the novel off. He produced two to three titles a month at \$1000 each, very good money in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Silverberg was able to rent a four-room Manhattan apartment and eventually purchased his first house with this revenue: an \$80,000 twenty-room mansion once owned by former New York City mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.

Hamling had come to the rescue of many genre writers who needed to pay the bills. Sex was selling, and Hamling contributed significantly to the destiny of paperback publishing and helped to shape sf's vintage years. He was born in 1921 on Chicago's South Side, a former Irish-Catholic altar boy whose faith was tested during his service in World War II. When Hamling returned to Chicago, he started to write science fiction. He sold his first story, "War with Jupiter," a collaborative effort with Mark Reinsberg, to *Amazing Stories* in 1939. In 1940, he founded a fanzine called *Stardust*. He then landed a job with Ziff-Davis Publications, editing the pulps that he had been writing for, working alongside a young Hugh Hefner, who, like Hamling, had lofty notions about branching out as an independent magazine publisher.

In 1948, Hamling established Greenleaf Publishing in the basement of his house in Evanston, Illinois: Greenleaf was his telephone exchange. He was pumping out sf pulps such as *Imagination* and *Imaginative Tales* (which featured an entire novel in each issue). The science-fiction market was dwindling and Hamling noticed that there was money to be made in soft-core sex books with flashy covers such as those offered by Bedstand and Beacon Books. Robert Silverberg wrote the first offering, Don Elliott's *Love Addict* (Nightstand #1501) and soon was delivering one title a month; at the same time, as Loren Beauchamp he was supplying Midwood with novels and writing also for Bedstand as David Challon and Mark Ryan. As Stan Vincent, he wrote *The Hot Beat* (1960) for Magnet Books. Only Hamling knew that Silverberg was behind all of these names; they came to the publishers blind, through the Scott Meredith Literary Agency.

Hamling had worked out a contract whereby the agency supplied new manuscripts for paperback books from a team of young writers, including Lawrence Block, Donald E. Westlake, Hal Dresner, and William Knowles. Each churned out a monthly title. Most were paid several hundred dollars per manuscript, a flat rate with no royalties but with a \$200 bonus for each reprint. Some of the more successful authors such as "Don Elliott" later received up to \$1,500—about the same advance that porn writers receive today from such presses as Masquerade Books, Blue Moon Books, and Cleis Press. The books

were sent to Hamling under pen names and the agency kept the writers' true identities secret. Literary agent Richard Curtis, who wrote a handful of the smut books as Burt Alden and Carl Aldrich (*Isle of Wantons* and *Lover's Swap*), represented a number of these titles:

When I worked at Scott Meredith Literary Agency, we handled a lot of soft-core sex novels. Most of the writers churned them out strictly for the money and as a means to hone their writing skills for more serious fiction. It was never assumed that sex novel writing was where you wanted to end your career, and many of the writers tried to have fun with the books. We even had a weekly card game attended by some of the writers and over beer and pretzels we would compete for the most outrageous sex scenes."⁴

Hamling began publishing *Rogue*, a low-brow men's magazine not quite in the same neighborhood as *Playboy*; *Rogue* was edited by an up-and-coming young writer named Harlan Ellison. Having noticed the success of Beacon and Bedstand soft-core books, Hamling began the Nightstand imprint. Technically, these books and magazines were not published through Greenleaf but by a shell company, Blake Pharmaceuticals, a failed firm whose shares Hamling had purchased for pennies. When Ellison returned to New York to pursue his writing career, Earl Kemp, a familiar face in sf fandom, replaced him. Hamling was tired of paying off the police and the city officials to look the other way and soon decided it was time to get out of Dodge. In a *San Diego Reader* article, "Porno Kings (and Queens)," Kemp reminisced that

In 1964, William Hamling discovered California. What he found was ... an elite hideout for the elite, a fantasy in anyone's imagination. Here, everywhere he looked, he saw someone he recognized, someone rich and famous and admired ... the more he became addicted to California living, the less we saw of him around the Porno Factory in Evanston. Then, much to our dismay, he began making noises about changing the whole focus of the business and moving the operation totally to California where morals were a great deal more relaxed than in Illinois, where the really beautiful people lived, and where the sun always shined. Along with this came his preliminary efforts at alerting certain key staff members to the eventuality of moving along with their jobs. I was one of them. (Hemmingson 92)

Hamling fancied himself a publisher of adult literature in the tradition of Barney Rossett at Grove Press or the infamous Maurice Girodias of Olympia. Hamling also published a number of political books under the Greenleaf colophon. In 1963, he released Ben Hass's expose, *KKK. The Truth About Vietnam: Report on U.S. Senate Hearings* appeared in 1966, as did *The Illustrated Presidential Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. The last was a reprint of the government report accompanied by lewd and shocking (for the times) illustrations that generously filled the pages. J. Edgar Hoover sent his G-men after Greenleaf, an operation for which he had a personal loathing—and he was not alone.

"At times there were as many as half a dozen competing agencies bugging the lines," Kemp states in the *San Diego Reader* article. "We could get nothing but police radio calls on our phones. I remember going out to a pay phone and calling the cops and demanding that they release at least one phone line for business purposes" (98). In 1966, Hamling was served a 25-count indictment out of

Houston, Texas, for violating the Federal criminal statutes of Interstate Transportation of Obscene Materials. The case was declared a mistrial, much to the chagrin of Federal prosecutors, but "Hamling was ecstatic," Kemp claims. "As he saw it, the courtroom battle that had begun more than 30 years before in the case of *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses*, resulting in a victory for the literary elite, had now ended in 1967 with a triumph for the man in the street."

On 5 March 1971, Attorney General John Mitchell held a news conference on the steps of the Justice Department to announce the indictment of four Greenleaf Classics employees for alleged crimes associated with the "unauthorized" production of the book *The Illustrated Presidential Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. They faced a 20-count indictment. One count prosecuted the book on grounds of obscenity, another on knowingly distributing obscenity. The jury was hung on the obscenity issue and the Justice Department tried a secondary strategy: twelve counts of violating Post-Office prohibitions against sending sexual material through the mail. This had nothing to do with the actual book, but rather with mailing 55,000 copies of a brochure describing it that included sample illustrations.

"Petitioners were convicted of mailing and conspiring to mail an obscene advertising brochure with sexually explicit photographic material relating to their illustrated version of an official report on obscenity, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 2, 371, and 1461," wrote Judge Thompson of the Federal Court in San Diego in his ruling.⁵ Hamling received one year's imprisonment on the conspiracy count and, consecutive with that, concurrent terms of three years each on the remaining eleven counts, plus a \$32,000 fine. Kemp—who had since resigned from Greenleaf—received one year and a day on the conspiracy count, followed by concurrent terms of two years for each of the eleven counts. Hamling and Kemp were also sentenced to five-year probation terms following their respective release dates.

In February 1976 Hamling and Kemp began serving their time at Terminal Island in Long Beach. "We spent three months and one day there," Kemp recalls. "This was (at the time) the federal 'legal bad boy minimum.' As things were constructed then, convicted criminals were the personal possession of the judge who sentenced them for three months and one day. At three months and two days, they become property of the Justice Department, so the judge has only that much time, one day, to salvage that criminal from the Justice Department grist mill."⁶

Greenleaf continued publishing books until 1985, fronted by a shell company owned by Hamling's son-in-law, Jack Abey. The only publishing survivor existing today and doing business is Leisure Books—and barely, having had one owner after the other over the decades. Leisure is currently an imprint at Dorchester Publishing; the colophon issues original horror paperbacks and sf/fantasy reprints from Prime Books and Wildside Press. Olympia Press has been resurrected as an e-book and print-on-demand provider of many old, out-of-print titles without copyright holders; the company also issues old titles from other long-gone presses under its Ophir Press imprint.⁷ Many of the Don Elliott books are collector's items, selling in the collector's market in the \$20-100 range, depending on first or second printing and condition of the book. And of course

Ellison's *Sex Gang* is a prized treasure among collectors. Publications such as Daley's *Sin-o-Rama* (2004) and Lovisi's *Dames, Dolls, and Delinquents* (2009), reprinting many of the now-classic covers, are examples of the public's fascination with the salad days of the soft-core paperbacks. I have an extensive collection of these paperbacks—hundreds lined on a shelf in protective wrappers that immediately attract the attention of guests, who find these books and their covers far more interesting than my shelf of literary, sf, and mystery books. The era of soft-core sleaze will fascinate scholars, collectors, and readers well into the twenty-second century.—**Michael Hemmingson, University of California, San Diego**

NOTES

1. See <<http://harlanellison.com/bib/storylist.htm>> for a list of Ellison's pen names.
2. See <<http://www.islets.net/collections/sexgang.html>> for Ellison's account of *Sex Gang*.
3. Ellison wrote cover copy for many Nightstand Books even after he left for New York; he was good with the colorful language needed on the covers.
4. This is quoted from Earl Kemp's online fanzine, *El*, located at: <<http://efanzines.com/EK/index.html>>.
5. From public court records on microfiche at the U.S. Federal Court, District of Southern California, San Diego.
6. Personal email from Kemp. 6 July 2004.
7. See <www.olympiapress.com>.

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When American News Company went out of the magazine distribution business, a gap appeared that hasn't been filled. Most of the science fiction titles had to find new vehicles of distribution—and found themselves up against individual, independent wholesalers who were not interested in handling these magazines and refused to take them or to do much of anything with them when they did. (This hit the detective titles in the same way.) Result: In many of the big cities, various science fiction titles cannot be found at any newsstand (85).

Everything seemed to be pretty screwed up heading out of the 1950s, starting to run all out of whack. It was as if the world had started some massive upheaval, shaking itself as if trying to get rid of an infestation of pesty fleas.

About 1954, a movement taken behind my back at the University of Chicago Science Fiction Club did it to me, pushed me out in front. And somehow the improbable became the reality; I became the leader. I didn't volunteer for that job; I was sort of commandeered into it, maybe because I talked so much. So there I was, the leader of the pack, and loving it, and discovering much to my amazement that I was really good at it.

That pack, from time to time, consisted of Fritz Leiber, Rog Phillips, Fred Saberhagen, Frank Robinson, Bruce Elliott, Ajay Budrys, Dean McLaughlin, Larry Shaw, and others on a regular basis. Passing through town, every big-name writer was paraded before the ever-growing Chicago Group. Robert Bloch was a frequent visitor, as was everyone's favorite, Bob Tucker. There were Philip José Farmer, "Doc" Smith, Sam Moskowitz, Hugo Gernsback, Harry Harrison, Kelly Freas, Ed Emsh, Avram Davidson, Cyril Kornbluth, Willy Ley, Sky Miller, Alfred Bester, Ted Cogswell, Ted Sturgeon, Ray Palmer, Bea Mahaffey, Thomas Scortia, and the ever popular Robert A. Heinlein.

In 1956, a handful of those devoted local science-fiction fans decided to go into business together. They became Advent Publishers, dedicated to producing books about science fiction and hoping to sell enough copies to pay the publishing partners' way to the annual WorldCon. Their first title was Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder* (1956). The rest of that story is history. This group of allied sf fans all worked together for years, hosting "Vote Chicago" parties, trying to bring the WorldCon back to Chicago again.

I never had it so good. At one time, I thought I knew personally everyone associated with science fiction and sf magazines. Better yet, they knew me. I was going to be 25, married with children, and thought I knew just about zilch about everything I encountered. Fortunately the things I saw and experienced insured rapid knowledge acquisition—things I never dreamed about, much less thought could happen. Some were good, some bad; a few were terrifying.

In New York City, Scott Meredith (formerly known as Sidney Feldman), always willing to pursue almost any nefarious scheme, had a couple of interesting rackets going on within the Scott Meredith Literary Agency. One was a "school" or "evaluation" of the output of prospective writers—for a fee, of course. This was a "reader's service": each manuscript would be read and evaluated and a detailed letter would be written to the writer who had paid them to do so. The real purpose of that letter was to keep the writer coming back again and again, paying

more and more reader's fees. Through the same service, any writer that looked the least bit encouraging was quickly set aside for special handling and eased into Meredith's pulp-writer's pool. At least that's what they tried to call it in those days.

Meredith already had under contract most of the regularly producing science-fiction writers who had materialized over the previous decade or so, and new ones turned up through Meredith's "reader's service" or from other sources. He was furnishing much of the short-story material filling the sf magazines of the day. Scott Meredith was Big Business.

He was also the single largest producer of pornography in the United States. This was the real product of Meredith's pulp-writer's pool, except that he had nothing to do with it. It was operated for Meredith by Henry Morrison (sf fan Henry Moskowitz) out of a Post Office box at Grand Central Station. All the pornography manuscripts were mailed from there in plain black boxes. For this reason the whole scheme became known as the "Black Box" operation.

From those black boxes Meredith provided a string of publishers in New York City and elsewhere with porno hacked out by those pulp writers. Among them were several well-known writers, including Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, and Evan Hunter, as well as people who had made their reputation in other genres (Donald E. Westlake, Lawrence Block, Hal Dresner). Some others eventually grew out of the confines of black-box pornography and made star-quality names for themselves in other directions.

But then the bottom fell out of the periodical world. As Robert Silverberg puts it: "The collapse of the ANC signaled the collapse of science fiction" (*Who Killed Science Fiction?* 116; full-text at <<http://efanzines.com/EK/eI29/index.htm>>). By the end of the 1950s, American News Company had disappeared. ANC had furnished newsstands and bookstalls nationwide with the publications customers loved to find waiting for them, week after week, month after month. When it closed, most major magazine and periodical publishers were stranded. If you can't get your magazine on sale, you have no product, and if you have no product, you have no business. A few entrepreneurs began structuring regional companies, attempting to recapture the business that ANC had lost; some of them were also publishers. Notable among these were two science-fiction people who moved into prominence, the first being Milton Luros, who went into business in Los Angeles.

The inexpensive magazines, pulps, digests, etc. almost all died an abrupt death and high among them for popularity were the sf magazines. Some publishers, at Scott Meredith's urging, moved into producing soft-core erotic paperbacks to replace their missing magazines in the marketplace. Initially, the bulk of those manuscripts were written by sf writers.

It was easy to show them how to turn a roaring spaceship into hot, hard, throbbing manly maleness destined for orgasmic ecstasy—and, not to be forgotten—changing those brass-bra-Bergey sultry sluts from outer space into the ordinary nymphos you see every day. Sf writers were, if nothing else, adaptable where writing-for-food was concerned—they were thoroughly pulp whores.

The black-box machine rolled merrily along, erecting one satisfied member after another. Some even ventured into outer space. In 1959, William Hamling,

who had been editor/publisher of *Imagination*, *Imaginative Tales*, *Space Travel*, etc., began his notorious Blake Pharmaceuticals operation, which published some of Meredith's black-box fillers. Harlan Ellison was his first editor-in-chief, followed by Ajay Budrys, Bruce Elliott, and most-worthy me (I had come aboard early in 1961 as the company expanded). This was my first encounter with law enforcement and their very, very illegal ways of doing whatever it was they were doing. The company was located in the rear suite of the second floor of the Graphics Arts Building on the corner of Sherman and Dempster in the Chicago suburb of Evanston. William Hamling's *Rogue* occupied the front suite on the same floor. *Golf Digest* was upstairs on the third floor.

Further into the 1960s, some funny stories started surfacing about outrageous things happening on the West Coast, something to do with "hippies and flower children." And, before you knew it, people you didn't even know were inviting you to parties that involved some frantic mixed-gender bed sharing. I didn't know anyone who didn't smoke pot. Often.

Only I wasn't one of them; I was Johnny Straight, morally upright and as naïve as they come. I was really into that. I was serious, constructive, and working my ass off, and turning into little Mr. Science Fiction all at the same time. I was shaking my fannish tailfeathers double-time. The first Science Fiction WorldCon that I attended was in 1952, in Chicago, and I foolishly made myself a promise that I could do a WorldCon. But it wasn't easy. It took years of concentrated action by a large group of Chicago fans. They were willing to work long, thankless hours so that I could realize my fantasy. It took ten years.

Before that, by 1961, those soft-core porn novels, originating at numerous locations, were blanketing the whole country, and selling out at the newsstands at an ever-increasing pace. The demand from the eager public was almost impossible to satisfy.

Politicians, law-enforcement types, and other reprehensible lowlifes began lining up to get to those publishers. Not one of us could ever figure out what we were doing wrong. Those books, at that time, were unbelievably inoffensive. Yet every law-enforcement agency in the nation began to ride the publishers hard and fast. It got to the point where it was difficult just getting through a day at the office for all the employees. There were wiretaps on each of our phone lines. We had the bugs swept for and removed, but the same night they would be replaced by the same subcontractors we had hired to remove them; they were being paid again by the cops for that service.

We were followed everywhere, especially if we left the US, by teams of Feds. It was like a vacation for them and an amusing sideline for us. We played "Spot the Feds" and would keep score, often making sure that they knew we knew they were following us again.

In 1962 my best fantasy materialized. Finally, backed by a strong, loyal crew, I was Chair of ChiCon III, the 20th World Science Fiction Convention. It was an incredible time filled with nonstop activity. Ted Sturgeon was guest of honor and delivered a remarkable speech at the convention awards banquet. Hugh Hefner held a lavish, by-invitation-only party at his original bunny hutch. *Playboy* had a suite at the convention and hosted nonstop parties for big-name pros.

In 1965, Hamling closed his publishing offices in Evanston and reopened them in San Diego. I went along as vice president and editorial director. In short order we were publishing fifty novels a month and more than one naked-people magazine a day. Moving to California was a radical event in my life. I was not prepared for how it would change me. Almost everything was different. For the very first time I felt that a me long hidden was beginning to surface. My life began. Our readers loved us.

In response to the absence of science fiction magazines brought on because of the demise of American News Company, I published *Who Killed Science Fiction?* in April 1960. The study, the first *SaFari Annual*, won a Hugo award in Seattle in 1961. (The full text is available as a free download at <<http://efanzines.com/EK/eI29/index.htm>>.) As E.J. Carnell wrote in this study: "a greater part of the loss of sales of the magazines to the pocketbook market is due largely to the chaotic system of distribution—in fact, the sf depression stems largely from the collapse of the American News Company. This was the straw that broke the camel's back and had repercussions throughout the American trade."—**Earl Kemp, Flagstaff, AZ**

Sex and *Star Trek*: Amorous Androids, Interstellar Promiscuity. There was a lot of hanky-panky going on aboard the starship *Enterprise* in the 1960s, something missing in the four subsequent series and the feature films—Commander Riker on *The Next Generation* was a bit of a ladies' man but he was never as libidinous and busy as Captain James T. Kirk, although he had his share of alien lovers. *Enterprise* had some sexy moments with the shapely female Vulcan and one of the human officers, but could that compare to the many loves of Mr. Spock? The 2009 *Star Trek* film, number eleven in the franchise, reflected these elements of the old *Star Trek*: in one scene, we see a young James Kirk, cadet, in bed with a green woman in her bra and panties; and there has been some secret love going on between a young Spock, an academy teacher, and Coreman Uhura. None of this will ever equal the amount of space hormones in the original series.

Captain James T. Kirk's sexual exploits have been a long-running joke and point of contention in the *Star Trek* mythos. Viewers have guffawed, admired, and been appalled by the Captain's macho method of saving the galaxy, taking off his shirt and showing off his physique whenever the opportunity arises. He romances every human, alien, or android female with whom he crosses paths, falling in love and, in three cases, having his heart broken and soul shattered by the death of that love. His greatest loss is Edith Keeler in "The City on the Edge of Forever" (first aired 6 Apr. 67). The second is an American-Indian-like woman/alien he marries after a head injury and amnesia, believing he is a god called "Kurak" in "The Paradise Syndrome" (4 Oct. 68); this wife is also several weeks pregnant, so he loses two lives that are dear to him. The third is an android female in "Requiem for Methuselah" (14 Feb. 69); she malfunctions and short-circuits when she feels deep and painful love with Kirk and does not know how to process the strange post-human emotions. Kirk's grief over her is so great that Spock uses a Vulcan mind-meld that causes Kirk to forget her.

He has also had women from his past come home to roost—Dr. Janice Lester in the last episode to air, “The Turnabout Intruder” (3 June 69), who switches her soul with his so that she inhabits his body; and Dr. Carol Marcus in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982), who bore him a son he never had the chance to know, and who is murdered by a Klingon in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* (1985). In “Court-Martial” (2 Feb. 67), the lawyer from the Federations’ judge advocate general’s office is a former girlfriend, who prosecutes Kirk; in “Shore Leave” (29 Dec. 66), Kirk remembers fondly a past flame from his Academy days, whereupon a psychic planetary computer manufactures a simulacrum-body that imitates her. Captain Kirk’s penis is busy in the twenty-second century and other centuries that he visits when time traveling. Pocket Books canonizes this fact with the publication of *Captain Kirk’s Guide to Women* (2008), in which the jacket copy exclaims: “Casanova, Don Juan, James Bond—these are men of legendary romance, but only one man can boast that his seductive powers take him boldly where no man has gone before: James T. Kirk.”

Kirk is a man who does not like to lose; he does not believe in the “no-win scenario” referred to as the “Kobaysi-maru” test in *The Wrath of Kahn*, an Academy test that has no positive, winning outcome—it is a test of character and mettle for potential command officers. We learn that Kirk, as a cadet, cheated and reprogrammed the test so that he could win and received a “commendation for original thinking.” He always saves the Galaxy and never fails; he is attractive to the opposite sex for his prowess and power; and he expects the sexual conquests that are the end result. He would not know what to do if a woman said no. Kirk’s salad days seem to be the period from when he was a Starfleet cadet through the five-year mission. There are two occasions where Kirk does not seek the amorous attentions of a woman and *he* is compelled to fall in love: in “A Private War” (2 Feb. 68), Kirk is bitten by an alien beast and the only cure available is provided by a local woman who practices herbal “witchcraft.” Kirk falls into a drugged daze. This also happens in “Elaan of Toyius” (20 Dec. 68)—Elaan’s touch can make a man emotionally enslaved to her; when she cries and her tears contact Kirk’s flesh, he turns to mush.

Two incidents of Kirk’s ability to make the opposite sex swoon raised some brows. Sado-masochist imagery predominates in “The Gamesmasters of Triskelion” (13 Jan. 68), wherein Kirk, Uhura, and Chekhov are kidnapped and forced to become gladiators for three bored, disembodied brains that are entertained by observing their captives fight and mate. These slaves wear “collars of obedience” and outfits with an S/M fashion flair. Kirk is paired off with a barely-clothed silver-haired woman with ample breasts and long legs; her role is fight trainer and bed companion. He makes her fall in love with him as they spend time together in their shared cage, so that she will rebel against the gamesmasters. This disobedience almost kills her. Next, a Lolita complex and shades of pedophilia are subtext in “Miri” (27 Oct. 66), in which Kirk intentionally uses his charms to make pubescent Miri (who is thirteen or fourteen) fall for him and do his bidding. He compliments her with a soothing voice and tells her how beautiful she is. She absorbs this attention because she is lonely. We later learn Miri is actually 300 years old, so Kirk is romancing an older woman, not a girl.

In the cartoon series that aired on Saturday mornings in 1973-74, we see Kirk somewhat out of character, perhaps for the sake of young audiences: in "The Jihad" (12 Jan. 74), a vivacious, statuesque female alien, Lara, expresses her attraction toward Kirk and makes several blatant sexual suggestions. Kirk tells her, "Maybe some other time." In the live-action series, we know that he would have acted on her proposal.

Legs, love, and lust in the *Star Trek* universe are liberated. We have to view the show's treatment of sensuality within the context of the so-called sexual revolution, but today we must also question's Kirk's professionalism. If he behaved as he does in today's military command structure, he would have a short career plagued with sexual harassment charges, reduction in rank, loss of command due to incompetence, and quite possibly court-martial and a dishonorable discharge for acts unbecoming of an officer.

Consider Yeoman Rand, Kirk's attractive, feisty, personal assistant at the top of season one. She wears the obligatory mini-dress uniform and has long blonde hair bundled up in a 1960s-style beehive. At first Kirk is uncomfortable with having a female yeoman assigned to him—she brings him his lunch and dinner, pays attention to his diet, and waits on his every need. Rand goes on away missions and is a strong presence in the first half of season one, but later fades into the shadows, appearing sporadically with few lines of dialogue. There does seem to be a relationship developing between them, perhaps never consummated or discussed. In "Mirror, Mirror" (6 Oct. 67), however, when Kirk notices a new Yeoman on the *Enterprise* with whom his alternate-universe self once had a serious relationship, his interest is piqued; in the coda, we see Kirk coyly sidling up to this Yeoman, engaging her in flirtatious conversation. His pursuit of female subordinates is plagued by unequal power; for if a female crew member does not find him attractive, it is unlikely that she is going to brush her Captain off. One may surmise that Kirk's repeated knack for courting and conquering women on other ships and planets—humanoid or otherwise—would be of concern for that generally invisible body, "Starfleet Command." It could be that sexual harassments lawsuits have been done away with in the *Star Trek* universe.

Kirk is not the only senior officer practicing biology. In fact, everyone in the crew does except Sulu and Uhura, whose alternate selves both had some kind of history in the "Mirror, Mirror" universe. In "Who Mourns for Adonis?" (22 Sept. 67), Scotty is enamored with a young female ensign and becomes jealous and irrational when the Greek god, Apollo, takes an interest in her and she reciprocates. So deep is his jealousy that Scotty nearly gets himself killed, despite knowing very well that he is no match for an all-powerful deity. In "The Lights of Zetar" (31 Jan. 69), Scotty falls in love with a scientist and makes foolish choices again.

In "Shore Leave" (29 Dec. 66), Dr. McCoy has a budding relationship with Ensign Tonia Barrows. She becomes jealous when McCoy, after being killed, rises from the dead "repaired," with two "dancers" that resemble Playboy Bunnies on each arm. In "For the World is Hollow and I Have Touched the Sky" (8 Nov. 68), McCoy finds a humanoid-alien woman to love and marry; she lives inside a hollow asteroid that is also a vast ship. McCoy has contracted an incurable

disease and only has a year to live. He decides to leave the *Enterprise* and spend his last days in his wife's arms.

Mr. Chekhov runs into a former girlfriend in "The Way to Eden" (29 Feb. 69), the episode referred to by fans as "Hippies in Space." Irina Galilulin is a scantily-clad fellow Russian national that he knew back in the Academy; she dropped out for an alternative hippie-like lifestyle, while he remained in the military. Chekhov is not always the young Casanova, however; in "Day of the Dove" (1 Nov. 68) he is possessed by a violent alien entity and attempts to rape a Klingon woman. He proves to be a fool for love, much like Scotty, when he falls for a woman who does not exist—a simulacrum created by an alien intelligence—in "Spectre of the Gun" (25 Oct. 68).

Mr. Spock, suppressing all emotions of his human half, has the most complicated love life of all. Nurse Chapel has an impassioned crush on Spock but can never verbalize her desire. Spock is aware of her feelings yet never discourages her, sometimes giving her mixed signals. In "Amok Time" (15 Sept. 67), when Chapel finds out that Spock has been betrothed to a Vulcan woman since childhood—Vulcans engage in arranged marriages to create power families—her heart sinks. "Amok Time" reveals the sexual cycles of Vulcan males, when they lose all sense of logic and have the burning need to mate every seven years—the *Ponn far*—and must do so or die in celibate madness and agony. In "This Side of Paradise" (2 Mar. 67), Lelia Kalomi, who once had futile feelings for the love-challenged Spock when the two knew each other on a different planet, exposes him to the spores of a plant on Omicron Ceti III. The spores alter his physiology, causing his human side to emerge. We witness a carefree, playful Spock in love. We also glimpse a deeply serious, lustful, violent Spock in "All Our Yesterdays" (14 Mar. 69), when, traveling back 6000 years in time, he reverts to the ways of his barbaric ancestors. He is seduced by a woman, Zarabeth; all Spock wants to do is have sex and eat animal flesh (Vulcans in his own era are vegetarians). This is the first time we see Spock truly happy, outside the alien influence in "This Side of Paradise."

The women in *Star Trek* are fiercely independent yet dress provocatively. Their roles were widely varied: some were high-ranking officers, doctors, world leaders, formidable antagonists, and assassins; others were slaves, seductresses, and catalysts of destruction. The uniforms worn by women serving on board the *Enterprise* are basically mini-dresses that barely cover the hips, sometimes revealing panty shots and always a good deal of nylon-covered leg. (In the more sedate later spin-offs, women and men wear the same single-piece red or blue attire.) Other women—human and alien alike—wear sheer, light, revealing outfits, exposing skin (pink, brown, or green) including midriff and cleavage. The executives and producers knew the sf demographic well: young men with active hormones and an appreciation of the female form. This is the same reason that many sf novels and magazines often featured women in sexy outfits on their covers even when the image had nothing to do with the plot.

In her on-line article "Sex and the *Star Trek* Woman," Laura Goodwin contends that feminists do not have a negative critical view of *Star Trek*'s portrayal of women and that it was not a sexist show. In the original series,

women were respected and well represented. We met priestesses, soldiers, warriors, villains, queens, and heroines: "Virtually all of the *Star Trek* women had careers and were self-supporting It's pretty clear that *TOS*-era men and women are 100% casual about the sight of women's bare legs, to such an extent that the military issues these skimpy uniforms."

Yet some critics disagree. "That the original *Star Trek* was sexist hardly needs articulation," contends Elyce Rae Helford in "A Part of Myself No Man Should Ever See," adding: "Feminist critics attack the stereotypical femininity of the series's women, the oversexualization or demonization of the few competent female characters, and the eroticization of women of color" (11). Helford reads "Turnabout Intruder" as Kirk's repressed feminine side taking over and his masculine resistance (which wins the gender battle) representing a sexist message that men are superior to women. Edward Whetmore maintains the same view in "A Female Captain's Enterprise," suggesting that the *Enterprise* might have been better off commanded by a Kirk with a woman's soul, who would make less violent choices and think twice about interfering with alien cultures.

"Turnabout Intruder" has sparked more critical discourse on gender and inequality than any other episode. Although *The Next Generation* had women in the role of Starfleet Admirals and *Voyager* had a tough, no-nonsense female captain, the original series will always be criticized for its portrayal of women as sex objects, as in Karin Blair's "Sex and *Star Trek*," Anne Cranny-Francis's "Sexuality and Sex-Role Stereotyping in *Star Trek*," and Mary Ann Tetreault's "The Trouble with *Star Trek*," which outline the faults of power and position in the futuristic military, contending that the women in the show are merely eye-candy for the men in charge and the male fans. In "Miri," Yeoman Rand becomes a victim of her attractiveness: she breaks into tears and confesses to Kirk that she feels unattractive because of the aging disease the landing party has contracted, the effects appearing on her legs. She is ashamed of her legs, and admits that on the *Enterprise*, she tried to make him look at her legs. Goodwin suggests that Rand only wants Kirk to see her as a woman, not as an equal or an officer, and that the insecurities between the sexes have not changed much in the future. Other critics might interpret Rand's anxieties as weak, showing her desire to please her boss and drawing viewers' attention to her legs rather than to her role as an officer.

In the early 1970s, two subgenres emerged: fan and "slash" fiction. Fan fiction ("fanfic") is the amateur's take without concern for canon, the market, good writing, or structured plot; fanfic could be a plotless day-in-the-life of, say, Mr. Spock as he meditates in his quarters or a poem written by Uhura. In fanfic, the writer can indulge in his or her fantasy with stories that would never be possible, such as explicit sexual encounters that usually have to do with homosexual couplings—"slash" fans indulge in Kirk and Spock showing their "true love" for each other, perhaps adding in McCoy or Scotty for a threesome; or with Mr. Sulu and Mr. Chekhov meeting late at night, having suppressed their sexual longings all day while sitting next to each other at the helm. Slash has been critically examined in academia as a pop-cultural oddity; critics of sociology, psychology, mass media, and literature alike have examined and explicated slash texts, which

are not limited to *Star Trek*; there is slash for nearly all successful genre television—*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Angel*, and *Dollhouse*. Slash offers fans of *Star Trek* (and other popular series) an avenue to explore sexual desires they project onto their favorite characters.—**Michael Hemmingson, University of California, San Diego**

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Strange Leafy Sex. Boston University's literary journal *AGNI* (issue 66), edited by critic Sven Birketts, contains a story by William T. Vollmann, "Widow's Weeds," from a forthcoming collection of "romantic love stories." What is curious about "Widow's Weeds" is that the narrator soon discovers his paramour is a plant-being, and their sex becomes green and leafy. This brings to mind Philip José Farmer's *Strange Relations* (1960), a collection of novellas that deal with sex and procreation between humans and plant-type aliens. This is also a departure for Vollmann, who for the past decade has been focusing on journalism and memoir. In a previous issue of *SFS* (35.1), I discussed how Vollmann's first novel, *You Bright and Risen Angels* (1987), is an unacknowledged cyberpunk tome. In *Expelled from Eden: A William T. Vollmann Reader* (2004), we learn that Vollmann's early influences were Philip K. Dick and James Blish and that as a pre-teen he wrote an sf novel about space explorers on the moon mysteriously plucked away one by one. It is unknown if any other stories in Vollmann's as-yet-untitled collection will have fantastical elements.—**Michael Hemmingson, University of California, San Diego**

Correspondence: On Accuracy in References to the Copernican Achievement. Thank you for all the enjoyable and stimulating roundtable discussion on proto/early sf in *SFS* 36.2 (July 2009). I am writing in response to Adam Roberts's contribution, "The Necessity of Copernican Revolution" (199-200). I understand that Roberts was speaking programatically, not historically, but was nevertheless dismayed as an historian of science by parts of his first paragraph. I agree with his claim that sf is a post-Copernican genre, but must disagree that "With Copernicus a *properly materialist* understanding of the cosmos *replaced the religious one*. What Copernicus did, famously, was *dethrone human beings* from the center of things" (199; emphasis added to identify the

dubious bits). In the first sentence, what counts as “materialist” and “religious” cosmologies (note the plural) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are matters for historical debate and contextual definition, even apart from the problematic qualifiers “properly” and “the” (as if there were one right and one wrong world-picture). Neither Copernicus nor his disciples and defenders during what is known as the Scientific Revolution count as materialists by most definitions. I would argue the same for the cosmologies identified as “Copernican” and “Newtonian”; they were born from theistic construals of nature. And, apart from the reality that naturalists can be both materialists and theists, Roberts’s “replacement thesis” is simply wrong. History in this case was not that simple.

Even more insidious is the second sentence quoted above, about the dethroning or demotion of the Earth and its human inhabitants from the privileged center of the universe. This is commonly, almost universally, believed even in twenty-first century scholarly circles. But is it true? In a word: no. The familiar assertion arises from the recycling of received wisdom without ever reading the primary documents produced by Copernicus, Rheticus (his first disciple), Galileo, Kepler, *et alia*, and their theological contemporaries. Freud popularized this misconception for the twentieth century in a secularist and self-serving argument, which assumed that religious authorities opposed Copernicus for “dethroning” humankind. (For his infamous “three blows” to human self-esteem claim—Copernicus, Darwin, and then Freud—see his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Joan Riviere [London: Allen, 1922], 240-41.) Freud was not the first to misread Copernicus and the implications of his achievement. Apart from Donne’s much-quoted 1611 poetic lament, erroneous interpretations of the Copernican shift were slipped into the early sf satires/seventeenth-century plurality-of-worlds narratives of Cyrano and Fontenelle. The image of dethroning was popularized in the nineteenth century by John William Draper in an influential and inaccurate polemic, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (New York, 1874).

Whatever its provenance—and the above is only a sketch—there is no excuse, given the last few decades of historical research, to keep this misconception on life support. My modest intention here is not to provide a bibliographic essay, only to request others to stop presenting the popular falsehood that Copernicus demoted humans from their divinely appointed place at the cosmic center. (Among other early modern fictions, that is. The medieval church did not suppress science, teach that the world was flat, or prohibit human dissection; nor was Giordano Bruno martyred for his scientific beliefs or Galileo imprisoned and tortured for defending Copernicus. Gardner Dozois’s editor’s preface to *Galileo’s Children: Tales of Science vs. Superstition* is a hardly unique embarrassment to sf studies that would have been excusable in 1805, but not in 2005. Great stories, though, as always.)

Dethronement requires prior enthronement. I suppose those who have not studied Jewish and Christian theology in the medieval and early-modern periods would blame the Bible.

A cursory reading of the creation myths in the first three chapters of *Genesis* would reasonably indicate that humans were the unique capstones of creation and lords of the Earth, around which circled the sun, moon, and stars. Certainly, humans are depicted as special and distinct, though I'd argue that the narrative shows the Sabbath as the blessed and beautiful crown of creation. In any event, the false claim about Copernicus assumes that geocentric theology and cosmology is by definition anthropocentric. But while geocentric discourse was literal and physical, anthropocentric imagery in early-modern theology and natural philosophy was surely figurative and metaphoric. Those who contemplated "man's place in nature" were not idiots. Mere spatial location did not determine moral and metaphysical value. Without presenting detailed evidence, it is (and was) apparent through careful and contextual study of scripture that we humans are the non-unique objects of divine blessing and covenant love (e.g., *Genesis* 9) and are creatures especially beloved *despite* our physical finitude, against the immensity of creation and the otherness of the Creator (e.g., Psalm 8). I'd argue that humanity was not biblically ensconced on a throne, waiting to be overthrown, in the first place.

To summarize a body of scholarship outside my own specialty (the Victorian period, full of its own misconceptions about Darwin, for instance), the Galileo Affair, which historians of science and theology have examined in minute detail, reveals that Copernicanism was *not* seen as representing the demotion of humankind. Indeed, in moving the Earth *closer* to the sphere of the fixed stars and to Heaven beyond, Copernicus (and later Galileo) *raised* our status.

But wasn't the center of the world-system where the honor, power, and glory were? Not really. In scientific terms, Earth's centrality in Aristotelian/Ptolemaic cosmology merely reflected the elemental heaviness of earth. The cosmic center—both for natural philosophers and monotheists—was base, inert, much lower in value than the bright bodies dwelling in celestial light. As people before and after Dante knew, the dead center of the Earth, and therefore of the cosmos, was the darkest pit of Hell.

In terms of the initial Christian responses to Copernicus (who was himself a pious Christian and church canon), the scandal of heliocentrism was in exalting the fallen inhabitants of the Earth at the expense of the shining Sun. The Copernican cosmos *changed* the Center of All into a place of honor, one worthy of the Sun. And the transformation of the Earth from cosmic center to planet-among-other-planets was actually a *promotion*. (We were now "closer to heaven" if one thought in spatial terms.)—Paul Fayter, *History of Science*, York University

A Response from Adam Roberts. I must thank Professor Fayter for his detailed and interesting response to my original (as he notes) thumbnail statement. Whilst I agree with him that history is not simple, and the history of the Reformation more unsimple than most, I hope he will permit me, respectfully, to disagree with almost everything else he says. His main argument, that "the transformation of the Earth from cosmic center to planet-among-other-planets was actually a *promotion*," seems to me to misunderstand early-modern cosmological thought.

"Promotion" assumes a linearly up-down logic, as if the Earth were being pegged up a few notches and placed in a more spiritually elevated position. That is not right, I think. Copernican cosmology was not about shuffling the vertical order of the planets; it was about challenging deep-rooted and at base fundamentally theological tenets about the finitude of the universe, the perfection and mutability of creation—the zone from the moon upwards being conceived as perfect and changeless—and the human *scale* of the universe. A more profound change still was in eliminating the qualitative difference between earthly life and life elsewhere in the cosmos: "and now what of all this?" John Swan, in *Speculum Mundi: or A Glasse Representing the Face of the World* (1635), asked of the observations of lunar landscapes, sunspots, comets, and novas: "nothing but onley this ... it seemeth that there is no great difference between them and things here below." That chilly and ontologically disorienting realization is a conceptual breakthrough necessary for the promulgation of science fiction.

Of course, Professor Fayter is quite right that other thinkers before Copernicus had speculated on a circular earth and heliocentric system; but it was Copernicus's work, for whatever reasons, that provoked the general change in the episteme (even though his book was, in Elizabeth L. Eisenstein's words, "by no means a landmark in observational science, but relied on old tables and often corrupted data"; and although his was, in the striking title of Owen Gingerich's 2004 study, *The Book Nobody Read*). It is also true that Copernicus was a devout Catholic, indeed a churchman. Professor Fayter's own scriptural hermeneutics ("it is [and was] apparent through careful and contextual study of scripture that we humans are the non-unique objects of divine blessing and covenant love") are likewise interesting, although I'm sure he knows as well as anybody that any amount of sometimes conflicting individual interpretations may be mined out of Biblical scripture. Galileo considered himself a good Catholic, too. Indeed, Galileo considered that scriptural authority supported a Copernican rather than Ptolomaic cosmos—that God making the sun stand still in the sky for Joshua would be easier if all He had to do was hold back the Earth from spinning, rather than arresting the entire solar sphere. But he was missing the point. The Catholic Church did not persecute Galileo, or attempt to suppress Copernicus, because of genuinely felt differences of interpretation over scripture. They did so in an act of calculated Counter-Reformation policy: a means of publicly asserting that *only the Church* had the authority to interpret scripture, and that the new sciences must kowtow. As Professor Fayter cites the period expertise of Gardner Dozois, he'll forgive me if I mention that Kim Stanley Robinson's superb and scrupulously researched new novel, *Galileo's Dream* (2009), is very good on precisely this.

It is true as far as it goes to say that "those who contemplated 'man's place in nature' (in the early-modern period) were not idiots" and that "mere spatial location did not determine moral and metaphysical value." Indeed not. But that an anthropomorphic moral and metaphysical value had been asserted, nonetheless, was axiomatic for both Catholic and emergent Protestant churches—asserted not by geographical positioning but by the uniqueness and magnitude of Christ's sacrifice and atonement. It is this, more than all the other things put together, that the new Copernican cosmology threatened, and (I would

say) that explained the establishment hostility towards it: myriad inhabited worlds would require myriad Christs to be crucified to save them, which diluted the crucial uniqueness of our Christ's sacrifice; or else would imply a God heartless enough to permit myriad alien beings to go to Hell unatoned.

Professor Fayter suggests that "the last few decades of historical research" have contradicted the assumptions behind my argument, although he mentions no specific texts. I have read if not comprehensively then I would like to think widely in that research, and would like to know where my reading has been delinquent. My particular argument is advanced in a book from the last few decades that I can understand Professor Fayter not considering significant, *The History of Science Fiction* (2006): namely that Reformation cultural fascinations forged what we now call sf out of a broadly Protestant cultural logic, and that certain core thematics of the contemporary genre (a persistent interest in questions of atonement, for instance) can be explained by this point of origin.

Kenneth Howell's *God's Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science* (2002) explores the way sixteenth- and seventeenth-century astronomers and theologians, particularly in Protestant Northern Europe, attempted to reconcile the new sciences with religion. Steven Vanden Broecke's review essay "Astrological Reform, Calvinism, and Cartesianism: Copernican Astronomy in the Low Countries, 1550–1650" (*Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science*, 2004) explores this territory very persuasively. At this point I might dilate upon questions of what "materialism" means, if I had not already gone on at too great a length. It may be enough to note that I agree with Professor Fayter that materialism and "theism" (I'd be tempted to be more historically contextual and say "deism") need not be at odds with one another; this is not the same thing as saying that the Catholic Church was prepared to countenance either.

Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston put it well in their co-edited third volume of *The Cambridge History of Science: Early Modern Science* (2006). They point out that recent research has stressed the disunity and diversity of cultural and scientific work at this time: "it is no longer clear that there was any coherent enterprise in the early modern period that can be identified with modern science." But they do not question that a revolution took place:

nothing has yet challenged contemporaries' own view of their epoch as drenched in novelty. On the contrary, historical research across a broad range of topics has confirmed their impression of pell-mell change at every level.... It is of course no coincidence that so many remarkable changes, however disparate in substance, pace and outcome, occurred in the same time span of about two hundred years.
(14)

We have a shorthand phrase to describe this change: Copernican revolution.—**Adam Roberts, Royal Holloway University, London**

Tribute to Robert A. Collins (1929-2009). Bob Collins, founder of the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in March, died on June 27 at his home in Boca Raton, Florida. From 1970 until his retirement in 2003, Bob was a specialist in Medieval and

Renaissance literature at Florida Atlantic University, where he also taught classes in fantasy and science fiction and was instrumental in establishing a fantasy/sf track in the Master of Arts program. Like the late founder of this journal, R.D. Mullen, Bob was one of those crucial people who have come to be known less for their own critical writings (though these were estimable, in both their cases) than for their efforts in building scholarly networks and institutions that have significantly transformed our field.

In 1979, buoyed by a grant from the estate of fantasy author and FAU faculty member Thomas Burnett Swann, on whom Bob later wrote a scholarly monograph, Bob sent out a call for papers for the first ICFA. Expecting to mount a small event, he was astonished by the overwhelming response: over 600 submissions flooded in from academics and others who had long read, taught, and studied in the area but who had never had a serious outlet for their scholarly work. The first ICFA, held at FAU in 1980, featured 225 papers by presenters from six countries. The early conferences attracted major authors and critics as guests of honor, including Brian W. Aldiss, John Barth, Leslie Fiedler, Stephen King, and Isaac Bashevis Singer. A writing workshop coordinated by James Gunn brought in Harlan Ellison, Frederik Pohl, Kate Wilhelm, and Gene Wolfe (among others) as teachers. Over the years, the ICFA has welcomed such prominent writers as Philip José Farmer, Neil Gaiman, Doris Lessing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Dan Simmons, Vernor Vinge, and Nalo Hopkinson (next year's guest of honor). As this diverse list of distinguished attendees shows, ICFA's vision of the field has always been catholic, including not only genre writing but also the work of postmodernist and other non-realist authors, artists, and filmmakers. ICFA, in short, sees science fiction as one subset of a long and distinguished tradition of "the fantastic" that also encompasses Spenser and Surrealism, Borges and Batman—a tradition that, as Bob never tired of pointing out, forms the true *mainstream* of world literature and art.

By 1982, the conference had become so large and complex that the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts was established to coordinate and mount the event. In 1988, IAFA began publishing *The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* (*JFA*), an interdisciplinary quarterly whose editors have included Carl Yoke, Bill Senior, and Brian Attebery. As Roger Schlobin, the second President of IAFA (who helped to insure the continuity of the conference through its moves to Texas and Fort Lauderdale), observes: "Opportunities that were created under Bob's watch have become fountains of knowledge. ICFA and IAFA gave the fantastic the credibility that carried it into the universe of the Modern Language Association. Volumes of conference proceedings burst forth. *JFA* sprayed articles throughout the canon. The multitude who have benefitted from Bob's vision is beyond counting."

It was at FAU that I first met Bob: I was a student in his 1987 sf class and became, at his invitation, an intern for *Fantasy Review* magazine, which he published out of his always cluttered, always busy, always cheerful office. I eventually became the magazine's review editor, and when it folded in favor of an annual volume, I coedited four installments of this series with Bob for Greenwood Press. The first conference paper I ever gave was at ICFA in 1988,

and my first scholarly publication was in the subsequent volume of proceedings. I am one of that multitude Roger mentions who has benefitted professionally from Bob's trail-blazing work, and I will always be grateful. But more than this, I will be grateful for having had the chance to know such a smart, funny, and generous man who gave of himself unstintingly so that others could prosper. Rest in peace, Bob.—**Rob Latham, *SFS***

SFRA 2009. The Science Fiction Research Association's annual conference was held June 13-14 at the Hotel Midtown in Atlanta, Georgia. Co-sponsored by Georgia Tech's School of Literature, Communication and Culture and very ably hosted by Lisa Yaszek and Doug Davis (with the talented assistance of Jason W. Ellis), the conference theme for this year was "Engineering the Future and Southern-Fried Science Fiction and Fantasy." The Guest of Honor was Michael Bishop and Special Guest Authors included F. Brett Cox, Paul di Filippo, Andy Duncan, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Jack McDevitt, and Warren Rochelle. In addition to the many author readings, signings, and roundtables, the film screenings and discussions, and the traditional SFRA banquet on Saturday evening, the numerous scholarly paper sessions treated such themes as "Social Visions of the Future," "Narrative, Carnival, and Ritual in SF," "Engineering and Race in SF and Fantasy," "Postcolonial and Cosmopolitan Futures," "Engineering SF Film Adaptations," "Music and SF," "Feminist Futures," "Evolution, Race, and Hybridity in SF Film and TV," and "Posthumanism and the Popular Imagination." The SFRA Awards ceremony celebrated the 2009 winners of the Graduate Student Paper Award (David M. Higgins), the Mary Kay Bray Award (Sandor Klapcsik), the Thomas Claerson Award (Hal Hall), the Pioneer Award (Neil Easterbrook), and the Pilgrim Award (Brian Attebery). During the SFRA business meeting on Sunday morning, several new grant opportunities were announced: Organization Grants (\$500-\$1000) for scholarly groups or organizations doing work to promote sf studies; Scholarship Grants (\$200-\$500) for research proposals that address significant issues in sf studies; Membership Grants (one year's membership in SFRA); and Travel Grants (\$300) to attend and present at the annual conference of the SFRA. For more information on these grants, contact the SFRA Secretary at <Secretary@sfra.org> and also consult the newly updated SFRA website at <www.sfra.org>. Next year's SFRA conference will be held in the desert town of Carefree, Arizona, on June 24-27 and will be organized around the theme of "Far Stars and Tin Stars: Science Fiction and the Frontier." Proposals for papers, panels, and other presentations should be sent to Craig Jacobsen at <jacobsen@mesacc.edu> by 15 March 2010.—**Arthur B. Evans, *SFS***

UCR SF Position. This is a sad update to a news item that appeared in the July issue of *SFS*. In a report on the 2009 Eaton Science Fiction Conference at the University of California, Riverside, I mentioned that, during the Saturday afternoon session, "Dean Stephen Cullenberg of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences announced that UCR would, over the next two years, be hiring two more faculty who specialize in science fiction: an sf author in the Department of Creative Writing and an sf film theorist in the Department of Media and

Cultural Studies.” At the time Dean Cullenberg made this announcement, a committee had already completed a search for a senior-level position in science-fiction writing. During Fall 2008, this committee reviewed almost fifty applications (a pool that included major Hugo- and Nebula-winning authors) and settled on a slate of four finalists; in early 2009, those finalists visited the UCR campus, where they gave public readings and conducted workshop sessions. The Creative Writing faculty then voted to make an offer (with tenure) to one of the candidates, who accepted the position.

An impressive appointment file was assembled, including supporting letters from major sf authors and scholars, and was in the hands of the UCR Provost when the California ballot initiatives geared to close a multi-billion-dollar state budget deficit went down to defeat on May 19. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger then announced a series of massive cuts, including huge slashes to higher education, at which point the UC central administration decided to freeze all open searches. As a result, the job offer we had made to fill the sf writing position was effectively cancelled, at least until such time as the hiring freeze expires.

Obviously, this is very disheartening news for those of us eager to build a science-fiction program at UCR. The good news is that Dean Cullenberg remains committed to this project over the long term, including the future hires he announced at the Eaton Conference. The bad news is that it is hard to know when the current budget woes will subside. Tax revenues in the state have collapsed due to the economic downturn, and the UC system is currently facing a hole in its collective budget of over \$800 million. The UC Regents recently voted to impose furloughs on all faculty and staff for the 2009-10 academic year, and at this point it is hard to see the following year offering a less grim prospect.

But this crisis cannot last forever, and meanwhile, to quote Stephen Sondheim, I’m still here. I have a modest budget to mount talks and other events in the coming years; the “SF Studies Symposium,” which debuted in April to great success, will continue; and plans for another Eaton Conference, likely in early 2011, are underway. It all adds up to a very California kind of apocalypse: the sky is falling, but the sun is shining.—**Rob Latham, SFS**

Special SFS issue on Octavia E. Butler for November 2010. It has been three years since the death of Octavia E. Butler. Her unexpected passing silenced a unique and major voice within science fiction and African-American literature. Readers, writers, scholars, and friends continue to discuss her life and legacy. This special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* offers a way of making permanent those critical and personal conversations. It also seeks to provide a preliminary evaluation of her accomplishments and of their impact.

Questions in which we are interested include but are not limited to the following: How do we position her work within science fiction’s particular social traditions and conventions? Do the reading protocols we bring to her work differ from those applied to immediate peers such as Delany, Le Guin, or Russ? What difference does the framing of her work within African-American literature make in terms of our reading of her as a science-fiction author? What does her work contribute to debates around feminism and sexuality?

Please send 500-word abstracts by 15 Dec. 2009 to De Witt Douglas Kilgore at <dkilgore@indiana.edu> or to Ranu Samantrai at <rsamantr@indiana.edu.> Completed papers will be due in mid-March 2010.—**De Witt Douglas Kilgore, University of Indiana**

American Literature Invites Submissions. We invite submissions for a special issue on science fiction, fantasy, and myth (individually or in combination) as they contribute to American literatures and cultures. How might a focus on sf, fantasy, and/or myth change our understanding of literary history, of literary engagements with scientific innovations, or with the pressing political concerns of the moment? What questions arise if we read more canonical works through the lens of sf, fantasy, or myth? Conversely, what happens to these categories when we take seriously, as scholars such as H. Bruce Franklin have done, their early appearance in American literary history?

The special-issue editors are Priscilla Wald and Gerry Canavan. Submissions of 11,000 words or less (including endnotes) should be sent electronically to <www.editorialmanager.com/al/default.asp> by 31 May 2010. When choosing a submission type, select "Special Issue." Contact the journal at 919-684-3948 or <am-lit@duke.edu> if you need assistance with the submission process. Other questions should be directed to Priscilla Wald <pwald@duke.edu> or Gerry Canavan <gerry.canavan@duke.edu>.—**Gerry Canavan, Duke University**

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